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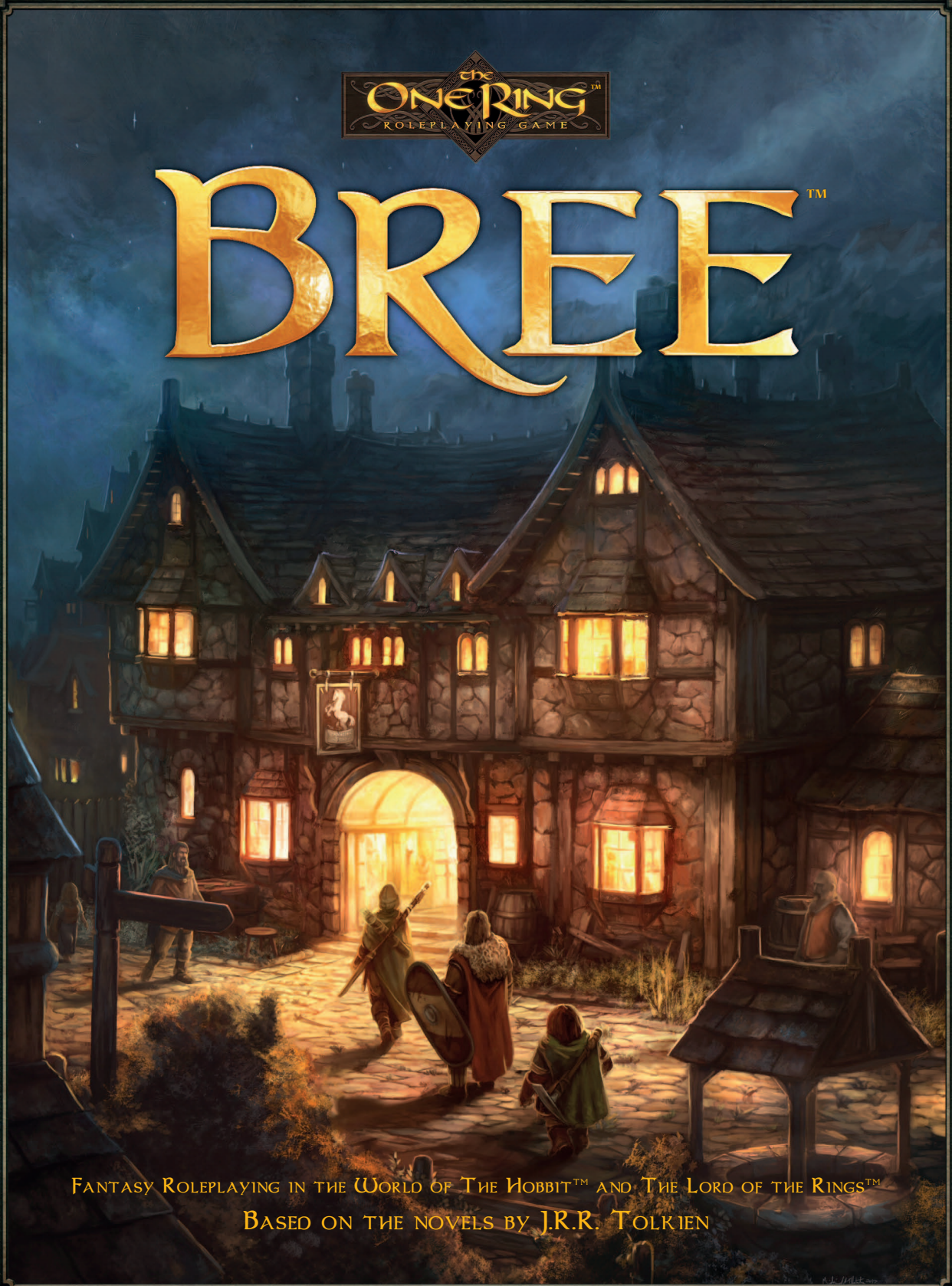

BREE™

Fantasy Roleplaying in the World of The Hobbit™ and The Lord of the Rings™

Based on the novels by J.R.R. Tolkien

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- Introduction -

If you're all going to meet in an inn, you may as well do it properly. Many a famous adventure has begun in The Prancing Pony, the famous inn that stands in the middle of Bree. It was here that Gandalf the Grey met Thorin Oakenshield, and here too that Frodo first met Strider. Bree is a little island of civilisation out in the Wild, a town that survives only by the valour of those brave heroes who stand watch over it.

Bree takes *The One Ring Roleplaying Game* west of Rivendell, beyond the Trollshaws and on past the gaze of Weathertop to where the great East Road meets the Greenway. As well as describing the Bree-land and the folk who dwell there, the supplement also contains three complete adventures.

The first section, **A History of The Bree-land**, describes the surprisingly long history of Bree, as known to both local folk and the Wise.

The following sections describes **Bree-hill and Around**, containing descriptions about the principle locations of the Bree-land and the characters who might be encountered there. It also describes **The Prancing Pony**, Bree's most famous landmark, providing rules for both visiting and for starting out on an adventure from the inn, as well as **Things to do in Bree**, including some suggestions for what sort of adventures might occur in and around Bree.

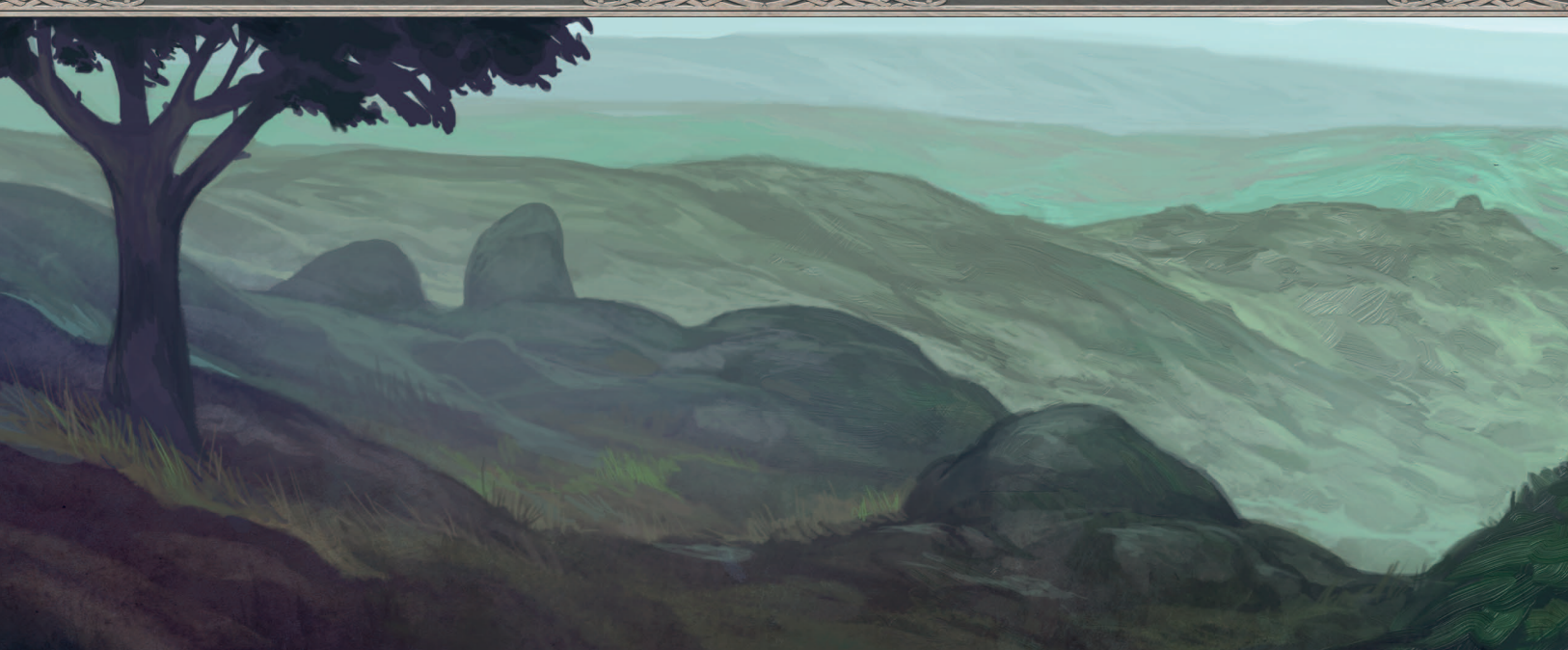
The next section, **The Bree-folk**, presents heroic cultures for playing both the Big Folk and the Little Folk who hail from Bree.

Finally, three complete adventures are included, set in and around the Bree-land. They are:

Old Bones and Skin: Something's breaking into the graveyard of Bree and stealing corpses. The folk of Bree assume it's the undead, but it's actually a hungry Old Troll digging up old bones to eat. The company must stake out the graveyard and find the real culprit, then track him to his lair in an old tomb and drive him away, but in doing so discover a far more insidious threat.

Strange Men, Strange Roads: The company set out to meet a Ranger at the Forsaken Inn, but they find him gone, murdered. A company of traders at the inn are the most likely suspects, but who amongst the travellers is guilty? The company must track these travellers on the Road to Bree and spy on them, uncovering a nefarious scheme afoot that threatens all of the Bree-land

Holed up in Staddle: The company join a Ranger hunting for a villain fleeing justice, following him into the Old



Forest before they lose him. But the villain has snuck into the Bree-land and holed up with a Hobbit family, taking them hostage and forcing them to help him bring his evil plans to fruition under the Harvest Moon.

How to Use this Guide

This supplement is a guide to the places and peoples of this part of Middle-earth, and is an invaluable source of new gaming material that expands upon what has been presented in *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*. It is intended primarily for the Loremaster, who can use this material to greatly enhance an ongoing campaign.

Players – especially those playing Hobbit or Men of Bree hero – may be allowed to read some of this guide, but others should generally refrain from doing so. Certainly no player should read any of the adventures included.

The adventures contained in this guide are designed either to be run for a starting company made up of Bree-folk (and maybe a Dwarf and a Hobbit or two) off on their first quest, or for a more seasoned company including a Ranger of the North.

While **Old Bones and Skin** and **Strange Men, Strange Roads** can be run as standalone adventures, together with **Holed Up in Staddle** they form a short campaign. If used in this way, the adventures should be played in the order they are presented in this guide.

The Tale of Years

If you want to follow the default pacing of gameplay suggested in *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, playing all the adventures contained in *Bree* should take three or more years. Every scenario offers plenty of opportunities to keep the companions busy for a year of game time, as the players can easily follow their Adventuring phase with a fruitful Fellowship phase, or even start a supplemental Adventuring phase building upon the consequences of the previous one. The final adventure is designed to be broken partway through with an additional Fellowship phase.

Even if you don't feel comfortable with playing one adventure per year, we suggest that you at least let one year pass for every two adventures. A tight pace of gameplay could be as follows:

Old Bones and Skin could be run in the autumn of 2950 (or any year, really). **Strange Men, Strange Roads** could then be run in the early summer of the following year. **Holed Up in Staddle** could then follow in the late summer, ending in the autumn of 2951.

Once your company have vanquished Gorlanc, they might like to set out on a quest beyond the Bree-land. The *Ruins of the North* supplement contains six more adventures set in Eriador, including one set in and around the Barrow-downs and Bree.

A History of the - Bree-land -

According to their own tales they were the original inhabitants and were the descendants of the First Men that ever wandered into the West of the middle-world...

Some will tell you that Bree is old.

Older than the Shire. Older than Minas Tirith. Older than Fornost. Older than the Havens. They tell that there has been a settlement here, on the Road, since the First Age of the World. And the Road passing through the Bree-land is ancient, for it was made by the Firstborn, long, long ago, when they passed this way heading West.

For others Bree is younger, as they say that the Men of Bree are cousins to the Dunlendings, a folk of Men that long ago dwelt in distant dales in the far south and that eventually moved north, to live in the foothills of the Misty Mountains.

Of course, if you ask a Bree-lander most of the above is just pointless chatter. Bree-hill has always been there, and if you want to know about history, you will be regaled with an infinitely detailed recounting of village gossip, marriages, births, deaths, things said in the taproom of the Pony, things not said when they should have been said, and so forth.

A History of the Four Villages

The Bree-folk on the whole does not account for many scholars. History, and geography for that matter, are words that aren't much used in the Bree-dialect, and books are a rare sight around here, almost as much as oliphaunts. And so it is that a definitive history of Bree is hard to come by.

But while most are generally wary of "book learning", not every Bree-lander is quite so wilfully ignorant. Take the Hobbit scholar Lemuel Heathertoes, for example: in the year 2921, Lemuel finished the compilation of his History of the Four Villages, a copy of which may be found in the Bree Counting House.

Any who can gain access to this book and have an interest to read it, will learn that Lemuel traces evidence of the existence of Bree back to the reign of the last king of Arnor. In the year 843 of the Third Age, the king ordered the construction of a 'fortress and stables' for the defence of travellers on the road. The text tells that nothing of

this ancient fortress survives; it was likely besieged and destroyed during the middle years of the Third Age, probably during the sack of Cardolan in 1409, if not earlier. The fall of Cardolan was followed by plague, and Lemuel recounts how recorded incidents tell of the waking of evil things in the oldest barrows west of Bree.

The book states that in the year 1300 or thereabouts, the first Hobbits came to this region from out of the East, and settled in the Bree-land. They chose to live mainly on the slopes of the Hill to the southeast, in the village of Staddle, and it is still a matter of debate today if that village was indeed founded by Hobbits, or if it was inhabited by the Big Folk before that.

In time, more and more Hobbits passed through Bree, until in the year 1601 the Fallohide brothers Marcho and Blanco obtained permission from the King of Arthedain to settle in the then-abandoned lands west of the Old Forest. Many of the Bree-hobbits followed them across the Brandywine to their new home, and so the Big Folk moved into the farms and gardens (and sometimes even the holes) vacated in their stead.

Among the historical facts that Heathertoes records as relevant to the history of Bree is the burning of the town in the year 1974, when armies of Orcs and Men attacked the kingdom of Arthedain. Bree-land was overrun, the Bree-folk fled and hid in the Chetwood, until the armies of the South Kingdom arrived and broke the power of Angmar.

The village was rebuilt in 1976, although some of those who survived the war chose to leave for the south instead of remaining behind in a ruined Eriador. Without a king in the North, the Bree-landers elected a Reeve to lead them and to administer their affairs, and that arrangement has lasted to the present day. A learned reader may recognise that the recorded line of Reeves is older, in fact, than the line of Stewards in Gondor.

Bree prospered in the years that followed the defeat of Angmar, especially when Dwarves started to appear on the road in greater numbers. Serving their needs (and relieving them of their heavy gold) became one of the chief businesses of Bree, along with trading goods from the Shire south through Tharbad.

The town survived the Long Winter thanks to its sheltered farmland, but other towns of the region did not. Plague and bad weather and Orc-invasions left the surrounding land empty and barren. Heathertoes notes that as recently as 2800, it was not unheard-of for Orcs to attack as far west as Bree, and the weapons of the town guards were used in deadly earnest time and again.

In the conclusions of his work, Lemuel Heathertoes ventures to say that is has been the close kinship of Bree and the Shire that helped both settlements to endure, when many other towns and villages in Eriador were depopulated and abandoned.

- Bree-land - & around

Before them rose Bree-hill barring the way, a dark mass against misty stars; and under its western flank nestled a large village. Towards it they now hurried desiring only to find a fire, and a door between them and the night.

Bree is the last little island of civilisation and warmth in the midst of the empty wilderness of the North. Step out the gates, and you are on the Road that leads out into the wide world beyond. The Bree-folk are sensible, stay-at-home types; they leave wandering the Wild to adventurers and other strange types. They know what they already have, and they cherish it.

Bree-hill

"Bree" means hill, in the tongue of the first men to live here. Bree-hill is not a remarkable hill by any means. It rises gently out of the rolling downs, carrying woods on its back to the east, but its south and west sides are cloaked in thick grasses. The hill is mostly chalky earth, but there is a small quarry on the south side, where the folk of Bree obtain good stone for building.

There was a watchtower atop the hill, long ago, but nothing remains of it now. Even without the tower, an observer on top of Bree-hill can see Weathertop in the distance to the east, and the Great Road with its gentle bend south to avoid the perils of the Midgewater Marshes. To the west, the lines of the Greenway can still be seen, graven onto the land, passing through the farms and pastures of the Bree-land and out into the wild to the south.

North, too, runs the Greenway – the City Road, some in Bree still call it, although the city it once led to is gone now. Further west the East Road unfolds like a dark ribbon beyond the crossings where it meets the Greenway, bordering the perils of the haunted Barrow-downs and beyond, the choking thickets of the Old Forest.

Bree itself lies south-west of the hill, close to the Greenway-crossing. Staddle is on the far side of the hill, on its south-eastern slope, and Combe beyond that to the north, in a deep dark valley. The Chetwood grows on the north-eastern side of the valley, spreading out and turning wilder and more tangled as it runs north and east. Many paths lead through the woods to Archet.

Bree's farms are tightly clustered around the hill. The soil of the Bree-land is rich and dark, good for root vegetables and mushrooms in particular. Further from the town proper, sheep, cows and goats graze on the rolling hills and crop the grass that grows over ancient roads and tombs. There are a few outlying farmhouses studded across the swathes of territory that make up the greater Bree-land, but the Bree-landers generally mistrust anyone who lives outside the villages, and consider them to be strange and a little dangerous.

The Roads

The Greenway-crossing is where the East Road meets the North Road just outside the western boundaries of the four villages.

Referred to by the Bree-folk as The Road, singular, the East Road runs east to the High Pass and off to Wilderland, and west along the Old Forest, on through the Shire, and hence to the Blue Mountains and the Sea. The other road, once known as the North Road, is no longer in regular use, and is so overgrown that Men now call it the Greenway. The Greenway runs south to the crossings of Tharbad, and from there through the Gap of Rohan where it twists east to reach Gondor. North, it runs to what the Bree-folk call Deadman's Dike, which was once Fornost Erain, the seat of the kings of Arthedain.

The East Road

The East Road is much more relevant to the Bree-land than the Greeenway, in particular because Dwarves still pass through Bree regularly and thus can be encountered along the Road going east or west with packs on their backs. Those coming from Wilderland are often travelling on some lawful business or on some errand for the King under the Mountain, but others are of a poorer sort, pedlars of iron-ware, tinkers, or road-menders going to Bree or the Shire to offer their services.

New Fellowship Phase Undertaking: Guard the East Road

The great East Road is often guarded by the Rangers of the North, as part of their guardianship over the Shire and Eriador in general. But they are few in numbers, and often seek trusted allies to help in their watch and gather information. Ranger Companions and heroes who earned their trust who are spending a Fellowship phase in Bree may help the Rangers in patrolling the Road.

If a character chooses to guard the East Road on behalf of the Rangers, roll on the table below.

ᚠ. Choose any one result, or roll again.
1-3. *A duty well served:* Nothing exciting happens, but the Rangers appreciate your dedication. If you are a Ranger, raise your Standing rating by 1 point for the duration of the next Adventuring phase.
4-5. *Help needed:* You spy a group of travellers in difficulty (Dwarves being weary and dispirited after a very long journey, local farmers whose horses were spooked apparently for no reason and ran away, Hobbits from the Shire heading for the Prancing Pony who expected a shorter trip, etc.). You offer your help and they reward you with their gratitude. Recover 1 point of Hope.
6-7. *Good watch:* Gain an Advancement point in the Perception skill group.
8-9. *Very good watch:* Gain one Advancement point each in the Perception and Movement skill groups.
10. *Rumours:* You gather news and rumours from travellers on the Road. You gain two bonus Success dice to spend during any one encounter in the coming Adventuring phase.
ᛟ. *Scorned:* For the length of your watch, travellers have given you the treatment they reserve for the Rangers: scowling looks, scornful names, and well-aimed stones. Dispirited and angry, you gain 1 Shadow point.

Farmers from the Bree-land can also be met, riding on large fat horses on their way to the east side of the Shire, to sell their produce to some well-to do Hobbit families.
Inside Bree-land proper, the East Road runs south of the town and is kept in reasonable repair by the Bree-folk; within a few miles from the four villages it is kept clear of weeds and obstacles, and free from troublemakers (though the Rangers do much more than the Bree-folk know on that score).

Going east and approaching the Midgewater Marshes, the Road soon becomes very bad; for many long miles it is rutted and pitted, and almost lost in soft bog, so much that travellers journeying with ponies or on horseback often dismount to trudge along on foot. Side trails lead off the road to Staddle and Combe; the well-trod paths to Archet go through Combe valley.

There are trees growing along the Road for many leagues from the Greenway-crossing to the Brandywine Bridge, so ancient that the folk of Bree and the Shire say they were planted 'in the old days'. For more than half its course, the eaves of the Old Forest can be seen from the south side of the road, in places straying dangerously close to the line of trees bordering the road itself. At times in the past, the forest had to be driven back with axes and fire by folk from the four villages, but this has not been required in living memory.

Ruby Boffin

Shirriffing in the Shire is a respectable job: you go around helping people and sorting out problems. But 'beating the bounds' (that is, keeping a watch on the Shire's borders) is a chore that few Hobbits welcome, as it involves a great deal of walking without many possibilities to stop at an inn for a drink. Ruby Boffin, therefore, is a rarity, for she likes very long walks, and can be encountered even along the Great Road on her way to Bree.

Born in a family of the Eastfarthing, Ruby makes it a point to spend at least a couple of nights every month at The Pony. She seems to enjoy meeting Outsiders on the Road, and even relishes those occasions when she has to "put a bit of stick about", as she terms it. Her un-Hobbit-like taste for violence can be blamed on her younger days, when she went "Adventuring with a Wizard", and was never the same afterwards. Her fellow Bounders consider her rather cracked, of course, if not entirely mad.

Attribute Level: 4
Specialities: Shire-lore, Smoking
Distinctive Features: Bold, Keen-Eyed
Relevant Skills: Stealth ♦♦♦, Insight ♦♦, Riddle ♦♦♦

Western Bree-land

Western Bree-land – the region north of the East Road extending from the Greenway-crossing to the Brandywine Bridge, is a wide expanse, composed mostly of featureless flats broken by sparse woods and grey swellings, slowly rising as it fades into the deserted lone-lands to the North.

The area is mostly uninhabited and avoided by most folks, if it wasn't for a few adventurous Hobbits from Buckland to the west, who at times come here 'for the hunting' (mainly fowling), and a bunch of hardy shepherds from Bree to the east, bringing their herds beyond the Greenway when the season requires it.

In recent years though, Rangers have started to pass through the region in secret more and more often. They have been busy opening new trails allowing a traveller to go from Bree to the Brandywine Bridge and back without

Building the Refuge at Girdley Island

Hallas Dúnadan's main task is to complete the construction of the refuge on the borders of the Shire. When the fastness will be complete, the Rangers will be able to move swiftly along the river on their light, flat-bottomed boats, to patrol the borders of the land of the Hobbits as far south as Sarn Ford, more than thirty leagues away from the Brandywine Bridge, or to paddle north, up to Lake Evendim and the ruins of Annúminas. If the companions are Rangers of the North, or are presented with the occasion to help the Dúnedain in their endeavour, maybe after a specific request of Gandalf or Elrond Halfelven, they can join Hallas in his undertaking.

Girdley island is presently a tangle of wild shrubs and low trees, covering a strip of land about two miles in length, formed where the Brandywine splits its course in two streams. Clearing the island and building a hidden refuge is a task that will take many months to complete, especially as secrecy is required.

To help in the endeavour, the companions will have to spend a number of Fellowship phases, choosing the undertakings listed below.

Temporary Fellowhip Phase Undertakings: Building the Refuge at Girdley Island

Each Fellowship phase following an invitation to join in the construction of the refuge, the Loremaster will offer the companions a chance to take part in one stage of the endeavour, in the order they are listed below.

At least one companion must take part to each one of the listed stages and succeed in the required roll; if a hero possesses an appropriate Speciality, he additionally gains an Advancement point. If no one joins in a given stage of the construction, or no one succeeds in the required skill roll, the Loremaster will present the same stage at the next Fellowship phase.

- Stage 1. Scouting and clearing of the part of the island where the construction will take place. Roll Search.
- Stage 2. Opening trails allowing for the secret transportation of materials from the Bree-land to the river. Roll Explore.
- Stage 3. The transportation of the materials needed to build the secret fort. Roll Travel.
- Stage 4. First part of the construction of the fort itself. Roll Craft.
- Stage 5. Completion of the construction of the fort itself. Roll Craft.

Should the fort at Girdley Island be completed with their help the companions will have access to it permanently, and will have gained Gandalf the Grey as a Patron (or can expect a favour from him, if the Wizard is already a patron to the company).

Additionally, close to the end of the construction, a hidden chamber is discovered under the ground of the island, and the burial site of a noble of Arthedain is brought to light, along with a rich hoard of treasure. If the companions helped in the building of the refuge, treat their share as having a value of 10*** Treasure, multiplied by the number of stages they have helped completing.

been spied from the Road, and building a number of hidden refuges. Their goal is to reinforce their watch on the borders of the Shire, a task they have undertaken under orders from their chieftain, after a personal request from Gandalf, the Grey Wizard.

The Rangers of the North operate in this area out of Bree, using The Prancing Pony as their meeting place, but they have planned to build and maintain a fortified refuge on Girdley Island, a wooded eyot on the Brandywine, about ten miles north of the Bridge of Stonebows (see box).

Hallas Dúnadan

Hallas is a captain of the Rangers of the North, sent to lead the men put on watch over the Shire. He is usually found in the company of his son, Halbarad, a tall, young man in his twenties. Once esquire to Talandil, the guardian of Fornost Erain (see *Rivendell*, page 59), Hallas is wise in old lore and a shrewd tactician, a veteran of many battles fought in the Trollshaws. But among his many talents is an unguessable one: Hallas often enters the Shire with his son from Sarn Ford, posing as a merchant visiting the Southfarthing to buy pipe-weed. This way Hallas keeps himself up to date with any Shire gossip, and fills the pipes of his men with the best leaf.

Attribute Level:	5
Specialities:	Boating, Lore of Arnor, Shadow-lore
Distinctive Features:	Bold, Grim
Relevant Skills:	Riddle ♦♦♦♦, Battle ♦♦♦, Long Sword ♦♦♦
Endurance:	24

The Hall of Orgulas

There is an abandoned mansion less than ten leagues due northeast from the Brandywine Bridge, a few miles north of the East Road. It was a large and sumptuous building, now slowly falling into ruin, its size made all the more impressive considering that is was built by a Hobbit.

The mansion was erected almost one hundred years ago by order of one Orgulas Brandybuck, the youngest son of Marmadoc, a Master of Buckland. Obsessed by the hunting of a particular creature that supposedly lived in the woods to the north of the East Road, Orgulas eventually resolved to dedicate most of his time in catching the creature and spent a considerable part of his family fortune to build a hunting lodge there, in the Outlands. Orgulas laboured for several years with the help of Dwarven masons, eventually finding the time to get married and see the birth of a son. But evidently his family life in Buckland was not satisfactory enough to make Orgulas forget his obsession: during his sixtieth birthday party, Orgulas announced his intention to retire to his hunting lodge and leave his home once and for all.

The 'Deepdelver'

What is the creature that Orgulas Brandybuck calls the 'deepdelver'? Does it exist at all, or is it a figment of his distorted mind? It doesn't make a difference for the hobbit, as he will spend every minute of what remains of his life to hunt it. Should a Loremaster be interested in exploring the fate of Orgulas Brandybuck, he should first make a choice about the nature of the 'deepdelver', possibly selecting an explanation among the two presented here.

- The 'deepdelver' does not exist. Or rather, it is Orgulas who has become the 'deepdelver' indulging in his obsession, a creature so ferociously territorial that will attack anyone appearing to threaten his safety. Knowing the mansion inside and out (and below!), Orgulas can set traps and ambushes, luring nosy companions into deep pits and crumbling tunnels...
- The creature is real! The focus of Orgulas' obsession is an undead creature - an ancient vampire who since many centuries has been recovering from an old wound suffered in a forgotten duel, and that at the time of Orgulas' youth prowled the land in the form of a giant rat. Hounded by Orgulas, the vampire has been able to elude him to this day, but soon his strength will be fully recovered and he will become the hunter, to first prey on Orgulas, then on the inhabitants of Buckland and the east side of the Shire.

No one remembers when news of Orgulas stopped reaching the Shire, but when his disaffected son Gorbulas finally resolved to go and see what happened to his father about twenty years ago, he found the lodge deserted.

Since that day, the hall of Orgulas has been left to rot, together with the memory of his founder. Travellers that know of its existence shun it, but wanderers in search of shelter during stormy nights have spent a night or two under its roof, attracted by a faint light seen shining inside it, or at least so the gossips say.

Unbeknownst to everyone, including the Rangers patrolling the area, Orgulas is still alive, his wits completely gone. Several decades ago he convinced himself that his elusive quarry was not a surface dweller, but an underground creature, and he resolved to live under his hall, to delve deep into the nearby hills and seek out his prey. For years on end, Orgulas has quietly and patiently dug a complex of subterranean passages, following what he believes are the tracks left by the creature he now calls the 'deepdelver', in mocking tribute to his ancestor Gormadoc Brandybuck.

Having given body and soul to his quest, Orgulas rarely returns above ground, and only after nightfall, in order to enter his latest findings in a journal he keeps hidden in the library of his lodge. In the long years he has spent in the dark under his house, the hobbit has altered his habits drastically, including his diet, to adapt them to his subterranean existence. He has turned feral, as any intruder spending too much time in his house might discover.

The Chetwood

The forest known as the Chetwood rises on the back of Bree-hill, extending for about thirty miles to the north and covering about the same distance from the Greenway to the west to the Midgewater Marshes to the east.

While to an outsider walking along its eaves the Chetwood may appear wholesome and full of light, its inner regions are as old as the Old Forest; both are remnants of the ancient woodland that once covered all the land. But no one living in the Bree-land ever ventures far into the woods, and no one dares to ask what lies deep beneath its green canopy. Why should they stray far into the woods, when they can gather their firewood and building materials close to home?

Moreover, the southern reaches of the Chetwood have always been a refuge for the folk of the four villages, in times when their land was overrun with Orcs and Evil Men.

There are hidden cabins and caves in those parts of the wood where the Bree-landers once stored supplies in case they had to flee their homes. These days, few people bother care about those cabins and storehouses, but some of the older, more eccentric folk still hide a portion of every harvest in the wood, like squirrels. Of course, it is scavengers like squirrels and mice who benefit the most from the tradition – there are few large animals in the southern portion of the Chetwood, but plenty of birds and small game.

Despite the confidence of the Bree-landers and the pride they take for the quietness of their woods, the north-eastern Chetwood is a darker place. There, the ground slopes down slowly towards the boggy morass of the Midgewater Marshes (see *Rivendell*, page 56), and unwary travellers can find themselves waist-deep in mud if they step off the wrong tree-root. Here, too, are old patches of the forest where the trees sleep uneasily, and remember the axes of Angmar and the evil of Men. Even the woodwise Rangers of the North know it is best to avoid such places in the spring and autumn, when the trees, and their guardians, are at their cruellest.

Hazard Suggestion: Lost in the Chetwood (Guide – Fatigue)

Most of the Chetwood is not especially dangerous, as woods in the wide world go, but there are some thick, trackless patches near the Midgewater Marshes where unwary travellers may become ensnared. The foresters of Archet usually track down lost travellers after a few days of fruitless wandering.

Bree

The village of Bree had some hundred stone houses of the Big Folk, mostly above the Road, nestling on the hillside with windows looking west.

A traveller approaching Bree from the west will see the columns of smoke from its many chimneys rising into the sky before the prominent local landmark of Bree-hill. As they draw closer they will see a tall dark barrier running in a deep curve out from the hill and back around to it: a deep ditch with a thick and thorny hedge with closely interwoven boughs on the inner side. The Road passes over this dike by means of a causeway, and where the road cuts through the hedge it is barred by a large gate. Another gate sits at the southern corner of the tall barrier, where the Road runs out of the village. The gates are opened every morning, and closed at nightfall by gatekeepers who reside in small gate lodges next to each gate.

Five hundred folk, Big and Little, live within the thorny hedge of Bree; perhaps half that again live near Bree-hill or south of the Road, but are still close enough to the village to stumble home from an evening at The Prancing Pony without risking life and limb. The townsfolk divide the town into Old-town and New-town, although no one living today has seen the construction of any of the newer buildings.

The Bree-folk have no ruler. They elect a Reeve of Bree, who holds office for seven years and seven days, but they have little power, and are mainly charged with resolving disputes over property and livestock. Each village, including Bree, sends a councillor each year to advise the Reeve. The method of choosing a councillor varies from village to village: Staddle elects theirs; Combe sends the oldest villager who is still able to travel and still has some measure of wit; Archet has its own strange ways. Bree, in recognition of its size and importance, has a councillor and a Reeve; by tradition, if one is Big, the other is Little and vice versa.

Hedge & Gates

Bree's main defence is an ancient hedge that looks like it was woven at the time of the village's first inhabitants. Certainly the thorn bushes which make up this impenetrable barrier are so tall they must be many centuries old, and their gnarled limbs twist back and forth, weaving a pattern that must have taken great ages to grow to its current state. The causeways that carry the Road over the dike also date from those ancient times, and are still in good repair. A local legend tells that when Bree was abandoned during the war with Angmar, a lone Troll came down from the Trollshaws and took up residence in the lee of the southern causeway, hiding from the sun in its shadow and demanding a toll from passers-by. A

The Bree-wardens

In addition to the keeper at each gate, Bree employs a small number of Wardens, who keep the peace and deal with problems around the villages. Like their counterparts in the Shire, the wardens spend more time dealing with straying animals than thieves or two-legged miscreants. The Wardens are called up only when needed – on market days, or when a large number of strangers pass through town. Most young men spend a season or two on the Warden's roster, especially if they hope to get work as a caravan guard, which is considered an acceptable adventure among the Bree-folk.

Being a Warden carries with it a degree of prestige – Wardens get to carry a big stick, and even wear a helmet sometimes – but little danger. The Reeve appoints the Chief Warden, who serves until they become too old or infirm to carry out their not-especially-onerous duties. The position comes with a stipend, and the right to wear a red feather in one's cap.

human-like skull of prodigious size is kept as a treasure in the Counting-house, giving some substance to the old tale.

The deep dike and thick thorny hedge protect Bree on three sides, with the steep slopes of Bree-hill guarding it from the North and East. The hedge is tallest and thickest near the gates, but presents an impressive barrier that would surely dissuade any wandering animals or troublesome Goblins. The two gates are made of sturdy wood, bound in iron. There is a gatekeeper at each gate night and day, and several other watchmen can be called to duty at the ringing of a bell kept in each lodge. There is also a modest watchtower, half-way along the hedge between the two gates, built as the replacement for the toppled tower atop the hill. From the top of this tower, a good archer can strike at any foes clambering across the dike.

A well-hidden, smaller opening pierces the hedge to the north, where a small door of dark wood is reached by a path starting from The Pony. On the other side of the hedge, the track leads to the Greenway. The older Bree-hobbits call the opening the 'postern-gate', but every one else call it the 'Rangers' door', as only those stealthy wanderers use it nowadays.

The Quarry

The old quarry is still in infrequent use, but was worked extensively in times past, as its stone was used to build the houses of Bree, and to keep the road and the bridges across the Brandywine in good repair. At times of heavy rain, the quarry's excavations partially flood, and become extremely dangerous; Bree-children are warned not to trespass too close, for fear of drowning. Strange stories, discounted by all save the most credulous, insist that tunnels lead from the back of the quarry to the cellars of the older Hobbit-holes in Staddle; these same stories talk about Wights hiding in the darkness, or treasures buried in the last days of the kingdom.

A good part of the buildings in Bree do not owe their origins to the quarry though, but to old Tharbad, as the many oddly carved and mismatched stones set into their walls will tell. Much of the dressed stone that makes up the buildings of the East Row of Bree was in fact recovered from the abandoned ruins of once-mighty buildings by the crafty Bree-landers, whose common sense could not suffer such quality material to be left among the growing grasses.

The Green

This open space is the heart of Bree, where the townsfolk gather and where the chief business of the town takes place.

Markets are held four times a year here, when farmers and freeholders from the villages come in to sell their produce and livestock, and to buy from Dwarven merchants and the occasional enterprising Brandybuck. Merchants

sometimes come up the Greenway to buy and sell at the market; Shire-grown pipeweed and other clever things made by the Hobbits are especially popular, as are sturdy ponies. Bree is always crowded to bursting on market-days, and the Wardens call up all their reserves to keep an eye on things.

The Inn of The Prancing Pony (see page 26) stands opposite the Green, on the other side of the Road, while on the other is the Counting-house and Reeve's Hall.

The Counting-house was once where the king's men collected the taxes and tariffs from the Bree-folk and from travellers on the road. Today, it is still used for council meetings and tax collection, and is as close as Bree has to a town hall or lord's palace. The building itself sits upon pillars of stone, of various designs. These were found long ago amid the ancient ruins scattered across the empty lands around Bree, and dragged back to the town as a footing for the Counting-house. The pillars raise it up above the nearby buildings, and the Bree-folk think it most grand and clever. In reality, its elevated position, with no lower floor, makes the Counting-house rather draughty. This has the virtue of keeping council meetings brief and decisive, as even the most silver-tongued speakers find their eloquence to be most unhealthy in the long run.

The Counting-house is also home to Bree's treasury and mint (where suspect foreign coins are melted down and recast as good honest silver pennies), and to the Warden's Armoury, where spears and iron helmets are kept for times of need.

The Reeve's Hall is not the home of the Reeve: it is Bree's court-house. The Reeve's herald – usually, a young fellow who knows his letters – stands on the raised porch of the house and reads proclamations and by-laws made by the Reeve on market days. Documents and records are stored upstairs. Village legend claims that there is a vault in the basement that not only holds a fortune in silver, but also jewels and wonders from days of old, carried out of the ruins of the North-kingdom; in truth, the vault mainly contains bottles of Old Winyards and some cured hams.

Matthew Mugwort

There is wisdom and lore such that Wizards and Elves might possess through long years of study. And there's the knowing of Bree, which Matthew Mugwort, a Hobbit, possesses in spades. Put any question to him – preferably, over a pint in The Pony – and he'll answer it for you with complete and utter certainty. Matthew Mugwort knows right from wrong, and sensible business from the foolishness of foreign lands. He may not be counted among the Wise, but in Bree his opinion counts for a great deal indeed. From his barstool, Matthew Mugwort has pronounced judgements upon many topics, like the Rangers ("*troublesome outlaws, the lot of them*"), Orcs ("*they live far away in t' mountains, they do, and it's always them Dwerrves who're stirring 'em up*"), Outsiders ("*all right so long as they don't outstay their welcome*"), Barrow-wights ("*nonsense about ghosts – it's just fog and broken stones that look like men*"), and the future ("*pay it no mind and it'll attend to itself*").

As long as the beer's flowing, Mugwort will argue about anything with the placid impenetrability of a man who is absolutely certain that there's nothing of any worth outside Bree-land. If he's present in the bar when adventurers arrive, he'll argue with them and undermine anything they say: "*you came from Rivendell? Ha! That's out of fairy stories, man! Did you fly here on a magic boat, too?*". (Increase the TN of any **Riddle**, **Awe** or **Persuade** tests made in Mugwort's presence by 2. He is the living embodiment of the parochial attitude of most Bree-folk.)

Attribute Level: 2
Specialities: Bree-lore, Smoking
Distinctive Features: Forthright, Suspicious
Relevant Skills: Riddle ♦♦ , Persuade ♦♦

Old-town

Old-town, as may already have been surmised, is the oldest part of Bree, rising above the Road on the lower slopes of the Hill. The houses here all have windows looking west and are made from stone. Some stand two or even three storeys tall. The tallest are the home of crafters – weavers, dyers, leather-workers – and have workshops on the ground floor. Others are owned by wealthy farmers who own large portions of the countryside around the village. The folk of Old-town are notoriously snobbish towards 'blow-ins' and 'rustics', so if you haven't lived in Bree since before the days of the kings, you're simply not 'quality'. They don't extend this prejudice to travellers on the road; Old-town has always prospered from traffic and trade.

The best-known landmark in Old-town is the town well, sunk deep into the hillside to bring up good water even when other streams run dry. It's considered lucky for a traveller departing Bree to take a drink from the well just before leaving; since the beer in The Pony is always brewed with water from this well, the luck surely holds if the traveller has one more for the road.

The town well is also where youths from Bree gather in the hopes of signing on as caravan-guards and hired hands with merchants heading off along the Road. A young Bree-lander can earn more on a single trip to the Blue Mountains than in a year of work on a farm; Dwarves drive a hard bargain, but they pay in gold and silver.

Another common sight in Old-town are the Cellar-hobbits. When Hobbits first settled in Bree, some of them rented the cellars of human homes to live in. This became a tradition, where two families, Big and Little, share the same building. Often, the two families share responsibilities and chores; for example, the Sheafwheat family grow the wheat and mill it into flour, while the Greenbanks in their cellar are the bakers who turn that flour into the best bread in Bree. Opposite the well stands a notable house called the Dwarf-house – it was bought many years ago by a particular family of Dwarves. They do not live there year-round, but stay in it whenever they pass through Bree. The house is kept locked when empty, and there is endless speculation in the common-room of The Pony about exactly what is inside, with some favouring the theory that one of the fabled Dwarf-women lives there, and others assuming that it is full of gold. The Dwarves who own the Dwarf-house are strange and standoffish, even for Dwarves, and they go north along the Greenway as often as they go west to the Blue Mountains.

Twyc Greenleaf, Reeve of Bree

Old Twyc is in his third term as Reeve. He attributes his snowy-white hair and weariness to the demands of his high office; everyone else points out that he is well into his seventh decade, and that he spends more time snoozing than working in the Reeve's House. He entrusts virtually all business of managing Bree to his young (and ambitious) assistant, Cole.

The one thing that shakes him out of his lethargy is crime; as Reeve, he is the judge of Bree, and is infamously stern when it comes to the perpetrators of violence or cruelty.

Attribute Level: 2
Specialities: Bree-lore, Old Lore
Distinctive Features: Merry, Stern
Relevant Skills: Riddle ♦♦♦, Lore ♦♦♦, Persuade ♦♦

New-town

The houses of New-town stand on the higher slopes of the hill above Old-town. New-town is home to most of Bree's Hobbits. Some streets in New-town are Hobbit-sized and exceedingly narrow, especially where the Hobbits live in houses instead of holes. Houses are much more popular among Bree-hobbits than Shire-hobbits for several reasons. First, the Bree-hobbits learned stone-working from the Men and the Dwarves, and so are better at building snug, warm, sensible homes above ground. Second, and perhaps greater, Bree-hill's south-eastern slope is already so riddled with bore-holes, cellars, Hobbit-homes and tunnels that it's impractical to dig any more holes in the slopes near Bree.

The Big Folk of New-town are, in the main, less wealthy than their neighbours around the hill. Most are farmers who labour in the fields outside the village.

Notable locations in New-town include the school and the smithy. The school is the pride of Bree. Children, Big and Little, attend it for a few years when their families can spare them, and are taught their letters, arithmetic and other useful vocational skills (little of pure scholarly worth is taught, as such pursuits are deemed unnecessary by most for a happy life in the Bree-land.)

The other villages do not have schools, although some children come to Bree and board with relatives in order to attend lessons for a few years. The Schoolmistress of Bree is one of the most important people in the town, on a par with the Innkeeper or the Chief Warden.

The smithy in Bree makes horseshoes, nails, farm implements and other common goods. Adventurers seeking weapons or armour must wait until a market-day, or until there is a Dwarf-smith in town who can make such things.

Tad Tillfield

Young Tad is a newly commissioned Warden of Bree. Indeed, he is so excited about becoming a Warden that he has thrown himself wholeheartedly into his new role. He rushes around Bree-land on Important Missions and Warden Business, never stinting or shirking. The other, more experienced Wardens have realised that they can get Tad to do all their work for them, so he gets lumbered with all the worst jobs (or, as they tell him, *"entrusted with the most important tasks that only a true Warden can accomplish"*), like watching the gate on cold rainy nights, looking for sheep that have strayed into the Old Forest – or dealing with adventuring-types who look like they might cause trouble.

Tad takes the latter of these duties especially seriously; if the company enter Bree on his watch, he'll dog their every footstep to make sure they keep the peace of the town.

Attribute Level: 1
Specialities: Fire-making
Distinctive Features: Energetic
Relevant Skills: Awe ♦, Courtesy ♦, Search ♦♦

East Row

The East Row is the newest part of Bree, built on land that was once reserved for grazing by caravan-ponies. When refugees from lost Tharbad came north, they settled here and built the East Row. The houses here are built using stone taken from the abandoned city, and other ruins found within the Bree-land, and are more richly decorated than the rest of Bree.

Statues of old kings and heroes stand guard over doorways, and gargoyles and stone ships carry water down from gutters. The atmosphere in parts of the East Row is different to the rest of Bree: less welcoming, less trusting, less Hobbit-like.

Many of the East Row houses have gardens or orchards stretching back up the hillside behind them.

Anna Wintermoss, Schoolmistress

Anna runs the school in Bree, teaching the youths of Bree their letters and numbers. She's not a native of the North – she came up the Greenway five years ago, pursued by strange men who chased her right to the end of Bree-land. Anna never talks about her past, but from her accent and speech, she must come from the distant South. When not teaching, she sometimes wanders the Barrow-downs, as if looking for a particular tomb.

Attribute Level: 1
Specialities: Rhymes of Lore, Shadow-lore
Distinctive Features: Clever, Secretive
Relevant Skills: Lore ♦♦♦, Song ♦♦, Explore ♦

The Forsaken Inn

The Forsaken Inn is a day's travel east of Bree, along the East Road, and is the last safe house west of the mountains for most travellers. Some fortunate souls know the way to the hidden valley of Rivendell, and can rest at the house of Master Elrond; others, like Dwarves or Rangers, can read the signs to secret camps or refuges prepared by their kinfolk. But for most the beds of the Forsaken Inn are the last comfort to be found along the East Road.

The Forsaken Inn is an ill-favoured, unfriendly place; most of the customers are hunters and trappers from the surrounding lone-lands who mistrust strangers. The inn is a ramshackle half-ruin in poor repair, the beer is stale and the food is dire, but it is a place to rest on the road if the innkeeper bothers opening up. Travellers on the road are charged extortionate prices for room and board. In Bree, they tell stories about the Innkeeper of the Forsaken Inn, claiming that he keeps wolves that prey on travellers on the road who don't stay in his inn, or that he practises sorcery and murders guests who *do* stay in the inn.

Rangers frequent the Forsaken Inn; if one seeks the Dúnedain, look for them among the wild men and surly brutes in the common room here.

Jack the Forsaken

The current owner of the Forsaken Inn inherited the place by being the only guest on the night when the previous owner – an old woman who believed she was the widow of the last king – died in her bed. Jack is more than a half a bandit, but owning an inn has awoken something in him. As long as his guests don't cheat him or cross him, he'll guard them as they sleep. Give him half an excuse, though, and you'll find your purse empty and your pony sold when the morning comes.

In appearance Jack is scruffy, with a wiry frame and a face that tells the story of a tough life, despite his apparent young years. His countenance is rough, and he lacks most manners. However he is a survivor, eking out a meagre living, helping people as best as his bad habits and bitter experiences will allow.

Attribute Level: 3
Specialities: Burglary, Trading
Distinctive Features: Secretive, Nimble
Relevant Skills: Craft ♦♦, Stealth ♦♦

Staddle

There are two ways to see smoke come out of a Hobbit's ears. Firstly, you could go and visit Adelard Took, the champion pipe-smoker of Tookborough and the only Hobbit ever to blow finer smoke-rings than a Wizard. The second, and easier, method is to call Staddle "East Bree" in front of any Hobbits of the Tunnelly family. The insinuation that Staddle is a mere extension – or worse, suburb – of the larger town on the other side of the hill is absolute anathema to the proud Hobbits.

The village of Staddle is, with all honesty, very similar to Bree. There are some twenty stone houses of the Big Folk arranged along the crossing of two paths. One path runs south to the Road, and north to the pastures; the other path runs west along the slopes of the hill to Bree, passing

the Windmill of Staddle. More than half the village is underground; Hobbit-holes dot the banks and hillside, and a path of crushed gravel leads up to the grand door of the Smial of Staddle.

Adelard Took

Of Adelard, it was said that he could expel smoke from one ear or both, and blow different shapes and colours with each ear. His preferred weed was Old Toby, but for such trick-smoking he favoured a zesty brand from the Eastfarthing called Willow's Wisp. Accusations and allegations that he possessed a magic pipe made by the Dwarves dogged him all his life, even though it is a matter of public record in the Shire that he won the first pipe-smoking championship two years *before* his cousin Bilbo returned from his quest to the Lonely Mountain.

Staddle has an inn, the Lamplighter, which is a modest but welcoming establishment. It sees more custom from local Hobbits than Big Folk or foreigners.

The Smial of Staddle

More properly, the *Great* Smial of Staddle, although you could just say the Smial and everyone in Bree-land would know where you mean. The Smial of Staddle is the vast and labyrinthine underground mansion of the Tunnellies, the richest Hobbits in the region. The Tunnellies consider themselves the equal of any of the great families of the Shire, of the Tooks or Brandybucks or any other one would care to name. If anything, the Tunnellies say, their name is more prestigious, for the first holes of the Smial of Staddle were dug before any Hobbit entered the Shire.

The Tunnellies are not the only family to live in the Smial; after the Fell Winter, parts of the Smial fell into disuse, so other Hobbit families moved in, although they have to put up with the infamous tempers of their hosts. The last war fought in Bree, the War of 2930 (also known as the War of Thursday Afternoon), after all, was started by the Tunnellies. They have always objected to the authority of the Reeve of Bree, except when (as often happens), the Reeve is a Tunnelly. On that fateful Thursday in 2930, the Reeve was not a Tunnelly, and when he made a ruling against the Tunnellies, they marched back to the Smial in high dudgeon. The chieftain of the Tunnellies declared that Staddle would no longer be subject to the Reeve's jurisdiction, and would henceforth stand alone. Some dozen Hobbits were sent out to seize the windmill and "secure the border"; some accounts insist that a pony-rider was dispatched cross-country to Buckland to rally support there.

As it turned out, the first council of war held in the Smial was accompanied by an exceedingly fine supper, and the newly commissioned thanes of Staddle took a long nap afterwards. On waking, they felt somewhat more reasonable, and hostilities ceased, with the only significant casualty being the Tunnelly wine cellar.

Every so often, a hot-blooded Hobbit of Staddle will threaten a "repeat of 2930" or to "send a pony to Buckland" over some imagined slight from Bree.

Grandmother Tunnelly

The ruler of the Tunnelly clan is a Hobbit matriarch in the ancient mode; fiercely protective of her family, and determined to pry into the smallest aspects of their lives.

Nothing happens in Staddle without her knowledge and permission, and nothing intimidates her. If a Dragon landed on the Smial of Staddle, she would try to drive it away by thumping it on the nose with her umbrella.

Attribute Level: 3
Specialities: Cooking, Rhymes of Lore
Distinctive Features: Lordly, Wilful
Relevant Skills: Persuade ♦♦♦♦, Insight ♦♦♦♦

Combe

Combe lies in a deep, dark valley between hill and wood. It is always gloomy in the valley, and even the noonday sun struggles to penetrate the mists. The folk of Combe are stereotypically glum and dour, as if the darkness of their valley has leeched into their spirits. The main road to Combe is via a path that joins the East Road. There is a short-cut that goes through Staddle and then onto Bree, but that requires climbing the steep southern slope of the valley by the Stile of Combe, a staircase of steps cut into the rock. The Stile was once quite safe, but floods in the spring after the Fell Winter washed part of it away and weakened other sections, and now it is treacherous. The folk of Combe prophesy darkly that the rest of the Stile will soon collapse and bury some unlucky traveller, but that's just what a Combe-born fellow would say.

The village of Combe is the second-largest in terms of buildings, counting some thirty stone houses, but third in population. There is no inn or place for travellers to rest, other than begging shelter in a private house or barn. The folk are more Big than Little; perhaps if there were more Hobbits in Combe, it would be a brighter place. That said, the Hobbit family of Mudbanks come from Combe, and they are so direly dull they could make an Elf-child despair of life.

The valley of Combe is good farmland, and the high hillsides make for good grazing. If there is one thing that raises the spirits of the folk of Combe, it is their animals – they breed excellent sheep and cows, and keep a great many hounds. They have had need of these hounds in the past, as Trolls are drawn to the valley of Combe. To a Troll, Combe is a delight, with plenty of sheep to munch on and plenty of shadows and caves to hide in when the sun rises. The Rangers stop most of these Trolls, but still one or two creep down from the mountains every few years and must be driven off with fire and spears. If there are doughty warriors to be found in Bree-land, they live in Combe.

Oswald Breeker, the Squire of Combe

Said to be the richest and most miserly man in all of Bree-land, Oswald Breeker lives in the big house at the edge of Combe. He rarely goes outside, but employs Little servants to fetch and carry for him. Breeker owns much of the land around Combe, and demands high rents from the tenant-farmers who live there. He is not a popular man among the Bree-folk.

His wife died nine years ago, and his daughter vanished some years before that; she ran off with a minstrel, or went adventuring, or went mad, or ran away, depending on which gossip you listen to. No doubt he would pay well for any news of her.

Those few who have been guests at his table say that he has a room full of books and scrolls and old things, and that he spends long nights in study of the past. They say, too, that Rangers sometimes visit Oswald Breeker, and that they esteem him more than his neighbours, although why this is so they cannot fathom.

Attribute Level: 2
Specialities: Old Lore
Distinctive Features: Grim, Suspicious
Relevant Skills: Lore ♦♦, Courtesy ♦♦

The High House

This old ruin stands at the end of Combe valley. It was once a large fortified house, perhaps even a castle, although it is mostly tumbled-down and overgrown now. The shepherds of the upper vales keep sheep there in winter, and shelter there on rainy nights. Many who have slept there report having strange dreams of elder days, of warriors in shining armour and great battles and kings both wild and foolish.

Those who are wise in old lore may have heard of Malbeth the Seer, and of his house, rising close to the tower of Amon Sûl, and wonder if his ghost whispers to the simple shepherds of Combe.

The Thieves' Glen

A little coppice of woods near the entrance to the valley is commonly referred to as the Thieves' Glen. It is certainly ideally placed for ambushing travellers on the road to Bree, and offers plenty of places to hide or to stash stolen goods. There have been no bandit attacks this close to Bree in many years, but the name has stuck to the woods, as have stories of ghosts and buried treasure.

The Melancholy of Combe

The melancholy of Combe can be soothing to those who have suffered deeply. A hero who undertakes to *Heal Corruption* in Combe may choose to automatically succeed instead of rolling Craft or Song to remove Shadow. This automatic success removes 2 points of temporary Shadow.

Archet

Tree-girdled Archet is the smallest and most insular of the villages of Bree. The folk there are strange and secretive, and rarely visit the other villages. Even for natives of the Bree-land, Archet is sometimes hard to find, as if the paths around it move sometimes. Of course, Archet is so small that a traveller could walk right by it without noticing; it's little more than a dozen buildings, mostly wooden ones, clustered around a clearing in the forest. Other houses in Archet are cleverly concealed; some are built atop the tree themselves, others are built Hobbit-fashion among the roots of old trees.

There is an inn in Archet, the Woodfellow, that's also the trading post and common hall for the village, where visitors can stay if they have nowhere else to go. Archet is mostly Big Folk, although there are a few Hobbits there too. The Hobbits fish and catch eels out in the Midgewater Marshes, and have a great knowledge of those swamps.

They know certain medicinal herbs and mosses that grow there, as well as which places to avoid.

The folk of Archet are skilled bowmen, and provide hunting bows as well as timber and firewood to the other villages. By ancient custom dating back to the days of the kings, the Royal Forester is chosen by the Men of Archet. This is largely a ceremonial position, but it still carries great importance in town. The Forester is charged with protecting the game in the forest should the king ever return unexpectedly and wish to go hunting, and with ensuring that no bandits make the wood into their hiding place. These days, the only one of the Forester's duties that is still of any consequence is his authority over animals in the woods; no one may hunt deer or boars near Archet without his permission.

The Wood-castle

The Wood-castle is a spot between Archet and the East Road, where a knoll of rough stone rises suddenly out of the forest. It is a naturally defensible place; a clan of Dwarves could toil for years and not improve it as a fortress. From the top of the Wood-castle, an archer could command the forest as far south as the Road, and three warriors could hold the heights against a thousand. In the past, the Wood-castle has been both a bandit camp and a Troll lair; the folk of Archet now keep a close eye on it, and keep it ready in case danger threatens again.

The Elf-dell

Deep in the woods of Archet, where few mortals ever go, is a grassy dell where the Wandering Companies of the Elves sometimes make their camp. They are here most frequently in the summer, when the weather is fair and the stars blaze brightly at night. There are no Elf-friends in Archet, but some who live on the outskirts of the village have heard the Elves singing from afar.

Even when there are no Elves here, something of their presence lingers here, and the Elf-dell is always free from fear and care. The Elf-dell counts as a sheltered refuge, and any companion who rests there for the night reduces his Fatigue by 1.

Harry Talltree, the Forester of Archet

The current holder of the office of Royal Forester is Harry Talltree, a giant of a man. Despite his astounding size (seven feet if he's an inch) and prodigious girth, he is quiet as a mouse when moving through the forests. He carries a huge wood-chopping axe with him everywhere he goes, and knows how to use it on more than just trees.

There was a Troll's head on a spike outside his house until his neighbours complained about the smell and the flies buzzing around it, and Harry still gets asked to tell the story of how he cut the monster's head off whenever he goes to an inn.

In truth, Harry always leaves part of the story out. The Troll he fought was of the two-headed variety, and he only chopped off one head. The Troll is still alive, and now bears an unsurprising but still vehement grudge against the Forester.

Attribute Level:	4
Specialties:	Bree-lore, Woodwright
Distinctive Features:	Nimble, Tall
Relevant Skills:	Hunting ♦♦♦, Travel ♦♦♦

12
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4
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Bree
1: Gate
2: Rangers' door
3: Watch tower
4: Old quarry
5: The Green
6: The Inn of The Prancing Pony
7: The Counting-house
8: The Reeve's Hall
9: Old Town
10: The Well
11: New Town
12: School
13: Smithy
14: East Row

the - prancing pony -

Above the arch there was a lamp, and beneath it swung a large sideboard: a fat pony reared up on its hind legs. Over the door was painted in white letters: THE PRANCING PONY by BARLIMAN BUTTERBUR

There's been an inn close by the crossroads for many years in one form or another. The world outside the doors may whirl and change, but there'll always be good cheer and good beer in the common room of The Prancing Pony, in this age of the world (and the next, too, no doubt!).

From the front, the inn looks like a pleasant house, especially at the end of a long journey. It faces on to the road along one side of the Green in Bree, and two wings run back, cut in to the hillside, so at the rear the second-floor windows are level with the rising ground. A wide archway leads off the road and into a courtyard, and from there several broad steps on the left lead up to a door in to common-room of The Prancing Pony where a visitor will be warmly greeted by the Innkeeper.

The Pony is its current incarnation, and the information here is equally as current if you are setting your campaign in 2946 or 3017 or any year in between.

The Innkeeper

"I hope not, indeed," said Butterbur. "But spooks or no spooks, they won't get in The Pony so easy."

Barnabas Butterbur is one of the most important men in Bree, and cleverer than he seems. He may have a thousand things on his mind, nine hundred and ninety of which are errands and orders and shopping lists and gossip from Bree, but he knows that Bree is but a small place in a wide, wilder world - he knows something about Mordor for example, and has met Gandalf, and more besides.

Butterbur welcomes guests of all lands and races to his inn, so long as they do not cause trouble and pay their bills (and if there is trouble, he can call on a troupe of regulars at the inn who will throw troublemakers out). He is an excellent judge of both a traveller's character and immediate needs, and he is ready to offer lodging and services tailored to his clientele, knowing well the requirements of a hungry Hobbit, or the thirst of a travelling Dwarf, for example. He hears all sorts of gossip and rumour, and delights in sharing stories and telling tales, but knows when to keep his mouth shut too, which is a rare gift. More than anything else, he takes pride in his hospitality. He would stand between a Wraith and its prey, assuming its prey had paid for a room at The Pony for the night.

Attribute Level:	3
Specialities:	Cooking, Story-Telling
Distinctive Features:	Eager, Trusty
Relevant Skills:	Insight ♦♦♦♦, Riddle ♦♦♦, Courtesy ♦♦♦, Song ♦♦

The Innkeeper of The Pony

If you are setting your game after the year 3000, the Innkeeper of The Pony will be Barnabas Butterbur's son Barliman. Luckily, the mould for the Butterbur line was cast long ago, and every one for generations has been a close variation on that original model. (Use the description given for Barnabas to describe his son Barliman.)

Encountering the Innkeeper

Travellers arriving at the inn must make a **Courtesy** test when arriving to introduce themselves to the Innkeeper. There is no penalty for failure, other than the Innkeeper being too distracted or too suspicious to give the company a proper welcome. However, failing with an means Butterbur suspects, rightly or wrongly, that the company are up to no good, and will try to find some excuse to turn them away. If no such excuse springs to mind, then he will simply charge them twice the usual rates and keep a close eye on them.

A normal success lets the companions ask one question of Butterbur about current events or rumours, which he will answer as best he can. A great success means Butterbur is especially solicitous, and spends some time chatting with the company.

Again, the adventurers may ask a question of Butterbur about gossip or rumours in Bree, and get an accurate answer, but Butterbur will also volunteer a piece of information of benefit to the company. An extraordinary success gets two questions *and* Butterbur volunteers a piece of vital information.

The Innkeeper as a Patron

The Innkeeper of The Prancing Pony may not be a Wizard, or an Elf-lord, or a king, and the only skin he can change is a wine-skin. Still, for a company of heroes just setting out in the world, Butterbur can serve as a fine patron. He knows everything that happens in Bree-land, and much of what's going on Outside too, and is adept at putting a word in the right ear to nudge events for the better of all. If a farmer's beset by sheep-stealing wolves, or a Dwarf on the road sees an unquiet spirit, Butterbur might hear those tales of woe and send the companions off to deal with the problems.

The Staff

The Pony employs several young folk, Big and Little, to serve the guests and tend to their needs. At the very least, there'll be a pot-boy to fetch drinks and food and a stable-boy to take care of the animals there no matter what time visitors knock on the door. At busy times – in the evenings, or market-days, or Yuletide, or when a large number of thirsty travellers arrive – then the Innkeeper can call on half of Bree to work in the inn.

Like the Innkeeper, the pot-boys hear every bit of gossip in Bree, but are less discreet. A free drink or a coin or two can loosen tongues; although if Butterbur hears his staff speaking ill of a customer, he'll beat them round the ears with a wooden spoon (Fell and Grievous!).

The Common-room

The heart of The Prancing Pony is the big common-room, where the company gathers nightly around the big log fire. Three lamps hang from the ceiling beams, although as the fire blazes and the smoke rises, their light becomes obscured by the murk. Benches, stools and low tables start out neatly lined up in rows, but as the night goes on, they become scattered and shifted to accommodate singers, performers, knots of gossiping and conspiring Bree-landers, or companies of Outsiders off the Road.

Smaller booths and shadowy corners allow for patrons to observe the company without joining in the merriment. Here, the Innkeeper and the other worthies of Bree hold court each night. More decisions are made here than in the Reeve's chambers.

If the inn is very crowded, guests may sleep on the rush-covered floor of the common-room, but that only happens on market-days in Bree, and then only if foul weather blows down off the mountains in the evening, and visitors to Bree decide to spend the night instead of braving the rain.

The Taproom

Off to the side of the common-room is a smaller drinking-hall, called the taproom, where the kegs of ale are stored. When the common-room is filled to overflowing, the customers spill out into the taproom. It is also used during the day when the common-room is being cleaned, but customers or guests still want to quench their thirst.

Private Rooms

The inn has a number of small parlours, ante-rooms, snugs and crannies where a party of guests can be seated for a private meal. Regulars in The Pony know the quirks of the building; for example, if you sit in the corner of the common-room nearest the door, and press your ear to the wall, you can hear the conversation in the private parlour adjacent to it clear as day. Secrets have a way of coming out in Bree, one way or another.

Rooms for the Night

The Pony has plenty of space for guests, and is rarely full to capacity. Most of the rooms are much alike in terms of comfort; feather bolsters and thick blankets, mostly free of crawling things. It's not Rivendell, but it's better than most inns in the world. Some of the rooms in the north wing were made especially for hobbits when the Inn was built, on the ground floor with round windows, and with Hobbit-sized furniture, but most are made Bree-fashion: sized for Big Folk, but low enough to the floor that Hobbits can use them too.

The first floor of the inn has four larger sleeping rooms that can accommodate up to a dozen members of a company, as well as "good rooms" that are "fit for a lord" (and priced accordingly). The good rooms are something of a legend among the staff of the inn, as they are opened so rarely that tales of their opulence have become hugely exaggerated.

Bathhouse

Basins of hot water can be provided in any of the rooms, but for a traveller who really wants to get the Road out of his beard, there is nothing like a good hot bath in the bathhouse. Fresh water from the inn's well, copper kettles bubbling atop a big warm fire, freshly laundered towels – and the ponies watching you from the stable next door.

Stables

The stables in the courtyard of The Pony are warm and dry; the ostler there takes as good care of animals as the rest of the staff take of the paying guests. There are usually one or two spare ponies in the stables who can be bought or borrowed for the right price by adventuring companies (see *The One Ring roleplaying game*, page 160).

The Kitchens

The kitchens and pantries of the inn are never quiet; guests come and go at all hours of the day, and they are either hungry from long travel on the Road or eager to get a good breakfast before departing. The fare here is simple but hearty and pleasant; the stew pot, legend says, was started before the Fell Winter and has been bubbling away ever since.

A Night at the Prancing Pony (Encounters at the Inn)

"The company was in the big common-room of the inn. The gathering was large and mixed, as Frodo discovered, when his eyes got used to the light."

Whenever the companions stay at *The Pony*, they will most certainly join the company of the inn guests in the common-room. The first time they do so, they are welcomed by the regulars, especially if they come from some exotic place (meaning, anywhere but the Bree-land): the basic Tolerance is equal to the highest Wisdom in the group plus 1. Then, the innkeeper provides an individual Introduction (unless they were discourteous to him), calling for rolls of Courtesy or Riddle to provide or disguise their names. As soon as the companions' identities have been established to the satisfaction of the regulars, the heroes are free to mingle with the inn guests during the Interaction, to trade stories about faraway lands with local gossip. As the drinks flow and pipes are lit, Riddle or Song rolls may be called on by the worthies of Bree. As usual, Insight rolls may be required if the companions wish to discover any secret motive hidden behind a guest's inquisitiveness, while Inspire and Persuade are needed to enliven the evening, or win a heated debate.

The Enemy is Listening

As a famous Ranger likes to say, 'drink, fire, and chance-meeting are pleasant enough, but Bree isn't the Shire', and the common-room of The Pony may at times see the presence of less savoury guests than a drunken Bucklander or two. In such cases, if you are using the Eye of Mordor rules from the Rivendell supplement, increase the Eye Awareness of the company by 2 points for each ᚠ rolled during the encounter (instead of 1).

Common-room Guests Table

Roll on the table below to determine the composition of the guests crowding the common room at any time, using a Feat die and a Success die. If the Success die is a 1-5, that's the number of common guests encountered. If the Success die comes up a 6, a special guest is encountered instead. Roll once or twice on the table when the inn is quiet, three times during on the average night, and five times on busy days (such as a market-day).

Success Die	1-5	6
Feat Die	Common Guests	Special Guest
	Strange-looking wanderers	Ill-favoured fellow, a spy from Isengard gathering information for his master (apply the Eye of Mordor rules)
1	Inquisitive Men of Bree	The Reeve, or another notable of Bree (page 16-21), celebrating an official achievement
2	Talkative Bree-Hobbits	Matthew Mugwort (page 16), already in his cups
3	Hobbits from Staddle	Grandmother Tunnelly (page 21), incognito, watching over a nephew in search of adventure
4	Folk from Combe	Outlaw chief, enjoying his stolen gold and looking for a brawl
5	Folk from Archet	The Forester of Archet (page 23), hiring volunteers for his Troll-hunt
6	Bree-landers not from any of the villages	Ranger, relaxing, not wanting to chat about anything sounding vaguely adventurous
7	Shire-Hobbits, from Buckland or the Eastfarthing	Bilbo Baggins, travelling under the name of Inigo Grubb-Took, in Bree to meet a Dwarf friend
8	Travellers from the South or East	Mountebank or false magician, trying to cheat the companions of their gold, or at least to have them pay for his drinks
9	Dwarves from the Misty Mountains, going West	An errand-rider for the King under the Mountain, who lost his bodyguards in an ambush in Goblin-gate
10	Dwarves from the Blue Mountains, going East	Very old Dwarf, desiring to see the restored Kingdom under the Mountain before his death
	Roll again using a Success die to select a row; the result (1-6) are especially friendly or helpful to the companions	Gandalf the Grey, or a disguised Elf from the Wandering Companies, in Bree to meet the Rangers

Brewery

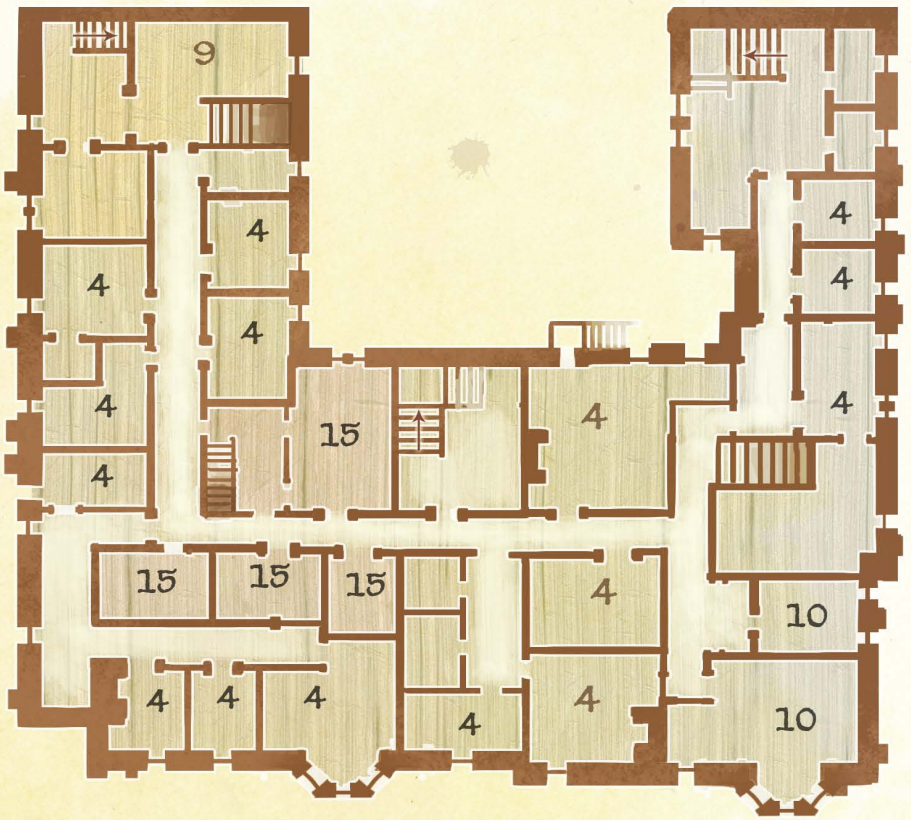
The inn's ale is made here. Other drinks are imported from the Shire and further afield; the Innkeeper likes to keep a few bottles of Dwarven spirits on hand for guests from the Ered Luin, and has some bottles down in the cellars that come all the way from Dorwinion.

Private Chambers

The Innkeeper and his family live on the top floor of the inn's main building. Most of the staff live elsewhere in Bree, but there are two small rooms on the ground floor for servants to sleep in.

The Prancing Pony

1: Common-room
2: Tap room
3: Private rooms
4: Rooms for the night
5: Bath house
6: Stables
7: Kitchens
8: Brewery
9: Private chambers: Innkeeper
10: Private chambers: Staff
11: Cellar
12: Pantry
13: Unused room/storage
14: Well
15: Communal sleeping rooms



First floor

Second floor

an - empty land -

"In those days no other Men had settled dwellings so far west, or within a hundred leagues of the Shire."

The Bree-land can at first glimpse appear to pose a challenge to the Loremaster running a Bree-land adventure, or a player heavily invested in assisting with creative descriptions of the sights and sounds they see around them.

The better part of the character of the Bree-land is that it is a quiet, empty place. So how then, can players of *The One Ring* make travel through such a place interesting?

There are plenty of generalised tips in the supplement *Journeys and Maps*, but this section provides some more specific guidance for the Bree-land.

Up Hill and Down Dale

The prominence of Bree-hill and the slightly more distant Weathertop, suggests that the Bree-land is a relatively flat place. The descriptions in *Lord of the Rings* describe rolling hills around Bree, so the dominance of Bree-hill certainly doesn't preclude all variations in the scenery. But a degree of flatness, and more modest landscapes, can be features that differentiates this region.

The lack of raised terrain can be woven into your journeys - does it echo a weariness in your company, or perhaps allow far distant events or places to be seen? Similarly, a flat land doesn't offer many places to hide, and a long pursuit might occur where both parties remain largely in view.

A day's travel can involve a long slow climb up a deceptively gentle hill, comprise an endless series of similar-seeming low hills, or could be a more broken up affair, as the company have need to traverse a field of gullies fresh worn into the landscape by sudden rains.

Wet Underfoot

The nearby Midgewater Marshes provide plenty of details for boggy, gruelling terrain. Describing traversing such boggy areas scattered across the Bree-land can give you some extra atmospheric detail. Ancient ruined buildings, once built on firm dry ground but now sunk into marshy surroundings, can impart a sense of the slowly but surely changing times.

On a more practical note, a company soaked to the skin and wading through bogs can be a useful driver of events for the Loremaster. The weight of sodden equipment and clothing can add up, and if you wish to steer your company in the direction of shelter, or indeed the comforts of Bree, then applying an increase in the encumbrance value of their sodden gear can help push them in the desired direction.

Echoes of Days Long Past

A key part of this region is the diminishing of the great kingdoms of Men. There is of course no equivalent of Minas Tirith in the Bree-land - the only inhabited remains of those times are Bree itself, and while it is certainly a pleasant place to stay after life on the road, it doesn't quite have the same majesty.

The remnants of that bygone age are still to be found. A road in the Bree-land that begins as a well-used sheep track can suddenly reveal a fragment of a once grand pavement, with finely crafted, interlocking paving stones, rising and cracking as the latter-day sheep track reasserts itself.

Glimpses of the past are an important part of any journey through the Bree-land: a grander, greater people used to live here, but have all long since vanished. Consider evidence of this in the landscape: what might first appear to be a convenient mossy hump for a weary traveller to sit on could easily turn out to be a piece of fallen statuary, long forgotten and overgrown. What is its tale? No one living within a hundred miles knows for certain, though they surely have stories.

What was just a sheltered depression in the setting sun could reveal itself as the remnants of some ruined chamber, long ago abandoned by wiser folk than now pass this way. Such places can be ideal locations to begin a side-quest; to foreshadow future ruin; to inspire your company with the majesty of the past; to throw up parts of a hero's backstory, predict darker times ahead, or simply be used to reinforce the character of this part of the setting.

The Weather

Without the grand features of dramatic landscapes that might be found elsewhere, there is an opportunity to focus on the weather in the Bree-land. It is a temperate area, well suited to play host to "English" weather: persistent gentle rain, misty mornings, pale sunlight, scudding fluffy clouds, light falls of snow, with occasional, short-lived thunder storms are all consistent with the feel one would expect for this part of Middle-earth.

The Small Things

Modest flora and fauna, described in more detail than one might chose to use in a more epic setting, also help impart a different feel to the Bree-land. Nettles, thistles and brambles, daisies and dandelions, dock leaves and celandines can impart a gentler, storybook feel.

Where the Vales of the mighty Anduin might be overseen by great Eagles soaring on the hunt for deer, here hawks hunt mice, and adders lie in wait for voles. The Bree-land is less geographically dramatic than other places in Middle-earth, and the lack of immediate physical hazards in the landscape can allow these quieter aspects to come to the fore.

A Lonely Land

While an empty place does seemingly present an immediate challenge to the Loremaster, this should not be dismissed simply as a flaw. The wide, lonely spaces, filled with nothing more than the wind and the voice of a lone crow can provide a portentous and meaningful atmosphere. Or indeed one that contrasts strongly with the warmth and close cosiness of The Prancing Pony.

Comparing the rustic and homely appeal of Bree to the wide emptiness of the lands that surround it, can really give your adventures a new aspect. A journey from the gossiping streets of Bree, where folk are all too keenly interested in one another's business, out into the empty places where help is always too far away can make the basis of a great Bree-land story.

Adventuring - in Bree -

Were these people all in league against him? He began to suspect even old Butterbur's fat face of concealing dark designs.

Bree is not Lake-town, where there's always a rising merchant prince to assist in some intrigue or another. Bree isn't Dale, where the agents of King Bard ride out to tame the wild lands.

Bree is safe. Bree is homely. Bree is, to be honest, rather dull – and that is its charm. Bree is not a place of excitement and danger all of the time. Let Bree be the quiet place the companions return to, or where they meet their allies, or where they hear strange stories by the fire in The Pony. Adventures may start in Bree, but they happen elsewhere. Mostly.

That doesn't mean, by the way, that Bree is wholly safe. Bree is half-way between the innocence of the Shire and the cruelty of the Wild – there can be a sinister side to Bree, behind the rustic charm and simple folk. Sometimes exciting or terrible things will occur in Bree, and be all the more shocking because of it's usually hum-drum rustic nature. Some in the town are good folk, and some are not, and most just don't want to be bothered. There'll be no trouble in the common-room of the inn, but there'll be plenty of rumour, intrigue and foreboding.

So, with that advice in mind, what sort of adventures might *start* in Bree? Here follows a selection of example story-hooks for your games of The One Ring.

To the Lonely Mountain!

A company of Dwarves, the sons of Bori, from the Blue Mountains arrives in Bree. They are, they say, kin to one of fabled twelve companions of Thorin Oakenshield, and have decided to leave their halls in the West and travel all the way across Wilderland to Erebor. The Sons of Bori are miners, not traders or wandering smiths, so they have not travelled on the Road in many years. They have come to Bree to hire some experienced guides and escorts who are willing to make the journey back to the Blue Mountains, where they will collect the treasures and heirlooms of their mansion, and then make the vastly longer journey east across the Misty Mountains, the Great River, Mirkwood and thence to the Long Lake and the Lonely Mountain. Those who go with them will be rewarded handsomely, with a fortune in gold.

The journey, though, will take more than a year to go there and back again. For that matter, why do the Sons of Bori need help from the folk of Bree? Surely, if they have such gold to spare, they could hire their fellow Dwarves from Erebor to escort them through Wilderland? Is there some secret rivalry between the Sons of Bori and the folk of Erebor that will complicate matters when the company arrives at the journey's end?

A Thief in the North Fields

A wealthy farmer of Bree, Robin Hayward, complains of a thief who keeps stealing chickens from his farm. He wants some brave adventurers to comb the countryside for this vile brigand.

Investigating, the companions discover that the 'thief' is in fact a young Ranger who has a very good reason for stealing the chickens. A blood-drinking Wight roams the lands north of Bree, and the Ranger is trying to lure the monster into a trap using the chickens as bait. So far, though, her efforts have been unsuccessful. The Wight is too wily to be tricked by chickens. Are any of the company brave enough to be used as bait for an undead horror? And do the rest of the company have the strength to slay the Wight when it looms out of the darkness?

Out of Tharbad

Two families of the East Row, the Colwaters and the Cherryfords, both trace their ancestry back to the wealthier quarter of Tharbad. They both prize a statue of a white tree that was lost when the town was flooded, nearly fifty years ago. Now, a merchant who came up the Greenway spoke of seeing a stone tree in the river. Can the companions recover the statue from the ruined town – and which family will pay the higher price to own it?

The Body in the Marsh

Eel-fishers on the marsh spot a body on a hillock amid the mud. It's early summer, so it could be an old corpse

that was exposed by the retreating waters, or it might be a recent victim of murder. The one problem: when the eel-fishers returned the next day with the Forester of Archet to investigate, the body was gone. Did someone bury the corpse again, or do the dead walk in the Midgewater Marshes?

The Elf & the Stag

An Elf from the Wandering Companies killed a stag within the borders of the Chetwood. A pair of enterprising folk out of Archet managed to catch the Elf – by Archet law, he has committed a crime. Do the laws of Men apply to the Fair Folk? How do the characters counsel the Forester or the Reeve of Bree?

Things to do while in Bree

"The Inn of Bree was still there, however, and the innkeeper was an important person. His house was ... a resort of Rangers and other wanderers, and for such travellers (mostly dwarves) as still journeyed on the East Road, to and from the Mountains."

New Fellowship Phase Undertakings

Opening Bree as a Sanctuary

Not every town or village is necessarily a potential sanctuary. To qualify as such, there must be something in a place that makes it a bulwark against the Shadow, some protection above and beyond the rest of Middle-earth. In some cases, the protection is obvious and material: Dale has its walls and armies, Esgaroth is guarded by the Long Lake. In other cases, the sanctuary has a powerful guardian whom the Enemy dares not assail, at least not yet. Beorn's house has Beorn, for example.

Other sanctuaries are hidden, or blessed with some supernatural power. Rivendell or Lórien are triple-girdled against the Enemy: by secrecy, by the Elven-lords who dwell there, and by the power of the masters of those places.

Bree... has a hedge and a ditch and a few men with cudgels. They may be valorous, but they cannot hope to defend against the sort of foes that haunt the North. If it were not for the protection of the Rangers, Bree would be destroyed.

Therefore, in order to be able to open Bree as a sanctuary, the company must be aware of the Rangers' watch on the town and be willing to aid in it. Furthermore, the company must also have the blessing or patronage of one of the important people in Bree-land. Bree's attitude to adventurers and heroes is a practical and sensible one. Adventurers are dangerous, unpredictable people, and do not make good neighbours. However, adventurers are sometimes wealthy (ill-gotten gains, no doubt, but silver looted from a tomb or Troll-hole jingles just the same as any other coin), and sometimes able to solve problems others cannot, usually with violence. Bree welcomes adventurers who are going to move on in a few days, not those who intend to stay for a whole Fellowship phase. This suspicion can be overcome if the Innkeeper or the Reeve or some other leader such as the Forester of Archet vouches for the company.

In order to open Bree as a sanctuary a company of heroes must have accomplished the following:

- Found about the watch of the Rangers, and earned their trust.
- Gained the trust of at least one important Bree personality (Innkeeper, Reeve, Forester).
- Have become regulars at the Prancing Pony (see page 37), having spent enough to appear decent enough individuals in the eyes of the Bree-folk.

Guard Bree and the Shire (Rangers of the North only)

"...foes that would freeze his heart, or lay his little town in ruin, if he were not guarded ceaselessly. Yet we would not have it otherwise."

The Rangers of the North have made their duty to protect the simple folk from the threats that lie outside their borders, keeping the Shadow at bay since the fall of the North Kingdom. They act in secret, keeping their wards free from care and fear, getting nothing but scorn in return for their deeds. A Ranger companion spending a Fellowship phase in the Bree-land or in the surrounding area lasting at least one entire season may choose this undertaking and make a roll of **Hunting** or **Battle**. On a success, the companion gains 1 Experience point and recovers 1 point of Hope (2 points of Hope on a great success and 3 on an extraordinary success). During the following Adventuring

phase, all encounters with the people of the protected area involving the Ranger companion see their Tolerance reduced by 1.

Write a Letter

"Frodo read the letter to himself, and then passed it to Pippin and Sam."

Outside the Shire, or Gondor in the far South, few folks in Middle-earth can say they have a well-organised system of letter-carriers or messengers. However, places like The Prancing Pony see their fair share of traffic, and sooner or later there'll be someone heading the right way who can be trusted to bring a letter.

When spending a Fellowship phase in a well-frequented sanctuary, companions may choose this undertaking and write a letter. There are several types of letters, serving different purposes, but they all require a **Courtesy** roll to be written, and a Feat die roll on the *Letter delivery* table opposite.

Letter Delivery Roll

The following modifiers can affect the Feat die roll (and ᚠ results are unaffected):

- -2 to the roll if the recipient lives far away, somewhere perilous or hard to reach: (-4 if both far away and perilous)
- +2 to the roll if you spend 1 Treasure to arrange for the delivery
- +3 to the roll if sending a letter from an Elven sanctuary
- If you're sending a letter from an Eagles' Eyre do not roll and apply the effects described for a ᚠ result.

Letter Delivery Table

	The letter is stolen by the Enemy. Depending on the contents of the letter, this might raise the company's Eye Awareness (see the *Rivendell* supplement, page 111), create more complications later in the adventure, or put the recipient of the letter in danger.
1-2	Lost! The letter has been lost, stolen or otherwise, and was never received; or, the letter arrives too late, either at some point AFTER the company has reached a destination, or even after his inheritance has been disposed of (in the case of a Letter of Farewell). In any case, ignore the effects of the letter.
3-4	The letter arrived later than expected, there were problems with the delivery, or in some way might have raised suspicion on the recipient. Downgrade the level of success of the **Courtesy** roll.
5-10	The letter arrived safely. Apply the effects of the letter as described.
ᚠ	The letter arrived in time, and the recipient was very impressed by the gesture: raise the quality of the **Courtesy** result by one level.

Types of Letter

Choose one of the following types of letter (all describe the effects of a letter that arrived in time at destination):

- ***I write to notify you of our impending arrival...*** **(Letter of Introduction):** If a hero arrives at the home of someone to whom they have written, increase the Tolerance for the encounter based on the writing companion's **Courtesy** roll: increase the rating by +1 on a success, by +2 on a great success, and +3 on an extraordinary success. Only one letter of introduction may be sent to a particular recipient.

For example, if Trotter writes a letter to Elrond before setting off for Rivendell and gets an extraordinary success, then Elrond's Tolerance increases by +3 for the encounter.

- ***I write in search of aid...*** **(Letter of Supplication):** Instead of increasing the Tolerance of an upcoming Encounter, a letter of this type increases the aid or rewards obtained if the encounter is successful, based on the quality of the roll.

For example, if a successful Encounter would normally result in the company being allowed to enter into the Halls of the Dwarves in the Blue Mountains, sending such a letter in advance might mean the Dwarves hold a feast to welcome the travellers, or have ponies and supplies waiting for them to speed their journey onwards.

- ***I write to ask you to meet us at...*** **(Letter of Appointment):** A letter of this type arranges a meeting with a patron or other ally at a specified location. A great or extraordinary success ensures the recipient will be there in person if they can; a normal success means the recipient might sent their own messenger or agent instead.

For example, the company could ask their patron Beorn to meet them at the eastern end of High Pass instead of at Beorn's house, as they intend to go south along the vales instead of pressing on to the river.

- ***I may not return...*** **(Letter of Farewell):** If a hero *perishes* in the Adventuring phase, then increase the experience bonus from Heroic Heritage by +1 (+2 on a great success, +3 on an extraordinary success), as long as the recipient of the letter becomes the replacement playe-hero. (See the rules for Retirement and Heroic Heritage on page 282 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*.)

Chance-meeting in the Inn

There are queer folk about ... and there have been even stranger travellers through Bree lately.

At some point during the Fellowship phase or the following Adventuring phase, the hero has a chance-meeting in Bree with some stranger who will play a significant role in their future fate. (The Loremaster may roll on the special guest column of the **Common-room Guests Table** on page 29 if they do not already have a Loremaster character in mind.)

In effect, this undertaking is a request to the Loremaster to give that player an interesting and unexpected encounter.

Chance-meetings are not always beneficial or pleasant; Thorin Oakenshield may have met Gandalf the Grey in Bree, but he might equally have met some agent of the Enemy who might have tempted him with Thrór's Ring, and planned to trick the Dwarves into the service of Mordor.

Learn the Paths of the Chetwood

A companion who spends a Fellowship phase living in Archet and exploring the woods around the village gains an additional Success die in all **Explore** and **Hunting** rolls made in the Chetwood or the Old Forest for the length of the following Adventuring phase.

Receive title (Regular at The Pony)

A companion who has gained the trust of the Innkeeper during an Adventuring phase may - with the Loremaster's permission – choose this undertaking and find their place among the regular guests of The Prancing Pony.

This undertaking grants lesser benefits in comparison to those bestowed upon a hero by other, more formal, titles, but is still useful to a wandering hero:

- The Standing rating of the adventurer now measures also his repute in the Bree-land, and the hero may affect the narration of a Year's End Fellowship phase spent there. Additionally, their standing score is not reduced, as if they returned home. Finally, a regular guest is given a good room at a floor of their choice, and access to a private parlour at all times.

- Men of Bree -

According to their own tales... they were the descendants of the first Men that ever wandered into the West of the middle-world. Few had survived the turmoils of the Elder Days; but when the Kings returned again over the Great Sea they had found the Bree-men still there, and they were still there now, when the memory of the old Kings had faded into the grass.

The small region of the Bree-Land is perhaps all that remains of the vanished kingdoms of Eriador, a little island of civilisation in the midst of a great deserted wilderness.

The area takes its name from its chief village, the town of Bree. The great mound of Bree-hill has sheltered its houses from the cold north wind since time immemorial, there where two ancient roads meet. The Greenway comes up through Dunland and Tharbad from the Gap of Rohan and goes as far as Deadman's Dike. The East road – *The* Road, really – is even older. It runs from the furthest east to the shores of the Sea.

Like the Shire, Bree is a safe haven for its denizens and travellers alike, despite the many threats that surround it. These days though, only Dwarves come up regularly along the East Road, and the Greenway sees even less traffic. But Bree endures.

The other three villages – the farming village of Staddle, Combe to the east and Archet in the Chetwood – see fewer visitors than Bree (and that's how they like it). Villagers come to Bree to bring goods to market, to trade with the wandering Dwarf-smiths and to drink in its famous inn, The Prancing Pony.

The Men of Bree tell stories of their ancestors, but if there is any truth left in those old tales, not even the Wise know, for the Men of Bree have been here for a long time even as Elves measure the passing years.

Description

The inhabitants of the Bree-land are mostly Men, but there are many families of Hobbits spread among the villages, especially in Staddle, and several of their customs and habits have been adopted by the Big Folk. In fact, the Men of Bree do not appear as outlandish as foreigners do to visitors from the Shire, and both the Big and the Little Folk live on very friendly terms. Their general appearance helps in this matter, too, as the Men of Bree are often brown-haired and rather short, tend to be stocky and broad, and are quick to laugh.

Standard of Living

The Bree-land is not as wealthy as the Shire, but the Bree-folk still maintain a lifestyle that could be interpreted to be at the low end of *Prosperous*. Part of their good fortune is due to the protection of their guardians, the Rangers of the North; those mysterious wanderers roam the land, silently patrolling the borders and roads, without anyone in Bree-land knowing for certain what they are up to.

Men of Bree Adventurers

Actual adventurers from the Bree-land are rare indeed. It is not unheard-of for a young Man of Bree to accompany some Dwarf-smiths west to the Blue Mountains, or east as far as the Forsaken Inn or even over the passes into Wilderland, but to go wandering without any thought of returning home... it is simply not the done thing, and anyone who does it is treated with suspicion and wariness. Maybe they are under some enchantment, or on the run from the law – why else would they leave Bree?

Suggested Callings: *Treasure-Hunter, Warden*. Even the most adventurous of Bree-landers tend to stay close to home, and Eriador provides plenty of challenges to those who go seeking for lost treasure. Others eventually realise that their land is but an island amid a sea of darkness, and choose to side with anyone willing to do something to preserve the peace most inhabitants of Bree take for granted.

Unusual Calling: *Slayer*. No major threats have plagued the Bree-land in recent years, and stories of tragic loss and revenge are only the matter of strange tales told by travellers at the inn.

What the Innkeeper Says...

- **Hobbits of the Shire:** "The Shire-folk are welcome enough in Bree, even if they call us outsiders; but then again, we call'em outsiders too! Not that many of 'em ever cross the Brandywine and come down to the cross-roads these days. Just the occasional Bucklander, and those are kin to our own Little Folk, you know".

- **Dwarves of the Blue Mountains:** "West they go, and east they go, then back west again. Always grim, never willing to talk about their business, but all that walking gives 'em a powerful thirst, and they're rarely short of coin, especially recently. There have been more going east of late, and they tell of a mountain of gold far away in Wilderland where the Dwarves are once again kings under the Mountain. I don't know about that, but it'd be a terrible blow to Bree if there were no more Dwarves passing through."

- **Rangers of the North:** "The wandering folk, yes, we call them Rangers. They sometimes visit Bree and stay for a day or two, then you might not see one for a month or a year or never again. They don't talk much, and bad news and bad times follow them. I wouldn't trust one of them, that's all I know."

- **Elves:** "I've never seen one, myself, but the stableboy swears he heard them singing out in the woods near Archet. He's half cracked, though. They were going west, he said, west to the Sea. I've never seen the Sea myself, neither, so what does it matter if a folk I'll never meet seek a place I'll never go? Nothing. Not a farthing."

- **Men of Bree:** "Oh, we've been around for quite a while, we Men of Bree. We've seen kings come and go, and we see Elves, and many Dwarves, go about their businesses along the road. Mark my words, when they all will be gone, we will be still here, at the crossroads."

- **Other Men:** "If they cause no trouble, and have coin to spend, and move along once their business is done, then I've nothing against them – but the folk down South are strange, and dangerous, and often as not bring trouble with them. Last few years, mind you, we've also had folk coming West over the mountains – big folk that

smelled like bears, and smaller men in green. What's all that about, that's what I want to know!"

Bree-Hobbits

The Little Folk of Bree are closely related to the Hobbits of the Shire – indeed, to most Big Folk, it is impossible to tell the difference unless one makes the mistake of asking one of the Hobbits, in which case get comfortable – you are in for a long talk about family trees, obscure legal issues, and exceedingly minute cultural differences. Players desiring to create a Bree-hobbit use all the rules concerning Hobbits of the Shire, with the following exceptions: they must replace the Cultural blessing of *Hobbit-sense* with that of the Men of Bree (*Bree-blood*, see below). Moreover, they must pick their Virtues from the following list: *Desperate Courage, Friendly and Inquisitive, The Big and the Little* (described below) and *Art of Disappearing, Small Folk* (described at pages 110 and 111 of *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*). Finally, any Cultural Reward must be selected from those available to Hobbits of the Shire.

Bree-Hobbits use distinctive family names which are generally unknown in The Shire: Banks, Brockhouse,Longholes, Mugwort, Sandheaver, Tunelly and Underhill.

Cultural Blessing

- Bree-blood -

"We're a bit suspicious round here of anything out of the way – uncanny, if you understand me; and we don't take to it all of a sudden."

The inclination of the Men of Bree to shy away from anything strange or unnatural has made them more vulnerable to adversaries able to instil fear in the heart of their enemies, as those monsters truly embody the darkest tales and legends of their folk, but has strengthened their resolve in the face of evil magic. When the Men of Bree are required to make a Fear test provoked by the special ability of an adversary, the difficulty of the roll is raised by one level (TN +2). Conversely, when they must make a Corruption test for any reason, the difficulty is reduced by two levels (TN -4).

Starting Skill Scores

Common Skills

Copy the following skill ranks onto the character sheet and underline the favoured skill.

Awe	0	Inspire	1	Persuade	2
Athletics	0	Travel	0	Stealth	2
Awareness	0	Insight	3	Search	0
Explore	0	Healing	1	Hunting	1
Song	1	Courtesy	3	Riddle	2
Craft	2	Battle	0	Lore	1

Weapon Skills

Choose one of the following two Weapon skill sets, and record it on the character sheet:

1) (Axes) 2, Bow 1, Dagger 1
2) Spear 2, Axe 1, Dagger 1

Specialities

Choose two traits from:

Appraising, Cooking, Herb-lore, Smoking, Trading, Woodwright

New Trait: Appraising

You have an eye for judging the quality of many things, from precious stones to exotic spices, or even the qualities of an individual.

Backgrounds

1 - Crossroads of the North

Your family has run a business in Bree since time immemorial, serving the needs of the Bree-landers and the strangers who come up from the south or east, or the Little Folk from the west. Why, your grandfather even once had Elves on his doorstep, as plain as day – and indeed, their coin was as good as anyone else's. You worked in the family business when you were younger, until a great desire came upon you to follow the Road and see where all those strangers and their gold come from.

Basic Attributes: Body 5, Heart 6, Wits 2
Favoured Skill: Courtesy
Distinctive Features:
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Cautious, Curious, Eager, Energetic, Fair-Spoken, Merry, Robust, Wary

2 - Off with Dwarves

Dwarf-miners and traders passing through Bree on their way to their mansions in the Blue Mountains took you with them as a caravan guard, and you became friends (if friendship is the right word for the grudging, slow-won respect of that grim folk). In time, you returned home to Bree, but wanderlust soon put your feet back on the road – only now you march in time to the walking songs of Durin's folk.

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 7, Wits 2
Favoured Skill: Search
Distinctive Features:
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Cautious, Determined, Generous, Gruff, Hardy, Honourable, Patient, Steadfast.

3 - From the Chetwood

Your kin dwell in the Chetwood, the forest east of Bree. Most of the forest is safe and wholesome, but parts – especially near the Midgewater Marshes – have their own perils, and as a child you learned to find food that was safe to eat near certain old trees that whispered to one another in the night. It was worth creeping out of Archet-village and risking the dangers of the wood, though, because on some nights, you could hear Elvish singing on the wind when the Wandering Companies passed by.

Basic Attributes: Body 5, Heart 5, Wits 3
Favoured Skill: Hunting
Distinctive Features:
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Cautious, Clever, Curious, Determined, Patient, Reckless, Robust, Suspicious

4 - Gate-Warden

The gates of Bree and the other villages are locked at night, to keep out those that would make trouble... and other things, too. You were one of the wardens, and spent many cold, lonely nights on watch, with only the stars and hooting owls for company.

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 5, Wits 4
Favoured Skill: Awareness
Distinctive Features:
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Cautious, Eager, Forthright, Just, Steadfast, Suspicious, True-hearted, Wary

5 - Came up the Greenway

Your grandfather was not born in the Bree-land. He made a long and arduous journey up from the South, across the Gap of Rohan from beyond the Isen. He crossed the river on the bridge at Tharbad with his wife and three children and settled here in the vale by Bree-hill. The North is cold and wild compared to the lands where your grandfather was born, but the tales he used to tell about the fierce kings of the South never made you doubt his choice.

Basic Attributes: Body 4, Heart 6, Wits 3
Favoured Skill: Travel
Distinctive Features
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Cautious, Energetic, Fair-spoken, Gruff, Hardy, Merry, True-hearted, Trusty

6 - No Longer Free from Care and Fear

It was many years ago that you discovered something that not many in the Bree-land even suspect: the region is far from being safe - it is a secluded shelter, a small island surrounded by unseen foes. You haven't told anyone as you fear they won't believe you. But you know for sure, because you have been about with a group of Outsiders... They are called Rangers in Bree, and not much is made of them, but they taught you to look for useful things in the wild. Now you know where to find shelter and supplies, a knowledge you will soon make use of, for the day when you will go out and look for them is near.

Basic Attributes: Body 3, Heart 7, Wits 3
Favoured Skill: Explore
Distinctive Features:
(choose two Traits from those listed)
Cautious, Clever, Forthright, Generous, Honourable, Just, Reckless, Trusty

Typical Names and Adventuring Age

The Men of Bree use names that to foreign ears sound similar to those used by Hobbits in the Shire (Hobbits beg to differ, of course).

Male Names: Alfred, Artie, Bill, Bob, Carl, Ed, Fred, Giles, Herb, Larry, Nob, Oswald, Percy, Perry, Sid, Tom, Harry.

Female Names: Daisy, Emma, Etta, Fay, Fern, Flora, Gert, Holly, Lily, Myrtle, Poppy, Rose, Sage, Tilly, Violet.

Family Names: Appledore, Asterfire, Bellsap, Briarcleave, Butterbur, Cherryborn, Chesterstout, Droverwind, Ferny, Foxglow, Goatleaf, Hardybough, Hedgedon, Hollybirch, Kettlegrass, Lilyhawk, Mossburn, Oakstout, Pickthorn, Pollenroad, Rushlight, Sedger, Shrubrose, Sweetroot, Thistlewool, Wayward.

Adventuring Age: 16-30

In the rare cases where Bree-folk go adventuring at all, they do it when the strength of youth is in their limbs, and usually return home to settle down before their fortieth year.

Cultural Virtues - Men of Bree

The Men of Bree live a sheltered life, it is true, but there is an upside in being fond of a warm hearth and the company of friends: you know there is something worth fighting for.

Desperate Courage

> **"Are you still willing to help me?' 'I am,' said Mr. Butterbur. 'More than ever."**

You lived all your life on the edge of the Wild, but the worst news that came to Bree in your time concerned only brigands or packs of hungry wolves. Now that you know something about the Shadow in the East, you are sure you will stand against it should the darkness extend this far west and threaten all that you love. If you are facing an adversary with an Attribute level equal to 6 or more, when you are fighting in a close combat stance you receive a bonus of +3 to your Parry score.

Friendly and Inquisitive

> **"Drink, fire, and chance-meeting are pleasant enough, but, well – this isn't the Shire."**

Since you started your adventures, you have realised that your folk's custom of trading with foreigners may help you in your endeavours. You have perfected your ability to inquire about the doings of strangers without letting curiosity get the better of you, providing you with many safe opportunities to learn from those you meet along the way. During an Encounter, if you invoke a pertinent Trait using a Personality or Custom skill, you automatically

raise by 1 your Advancement points total (do not mark a check, but raise your earned total directly).

Out of Memory and Old Tales

"Bree memories being retentive, Frodo was asked many times if he had written his book."

Luckily, very few Bree-folk have 'a memory like a lumber-room', where things wanted always end up buried. You have found that you rarely forget a face, the details of a story, the particulars of a map, or even the type of tracks that a band of Orcs you already faced leaves behind. You have learnt to exploit this insight to outguess your adversaries and those you meet, and to plan your journeys carefully. When you make a preliminary roll to determine your preparedness for either a journey, a combat or an encounter (see *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 151), you may make an additional **Riddle** roll: you gain 1 additional Success die on a success, 2 on a great success and 3 on an extraordinary result.

The Big and the Little

There were probably many more Outsiders scattered about in the West of the World in those days than the people of the Shire imagined.

Men and Hobbits live side by side in Bree, in a peaceful arrangement that is found nowhere else in the world. That's why you know Hobbits and their ways very well indeed, and you go along with them quite nicely. You have discovered that this friendliness and familiarity, combined with your natural cheerfulness, can be a blessing when travelling with others. Raise your company's Fellowship rating by 1 additional point. Additionally, you may select a second Fellowship focus, as long as one of them is a Hobbit companion. (If you are a Bree-Hobbit, one of them must be a Man of Bree.)

Traveller's Blessing

"Good luck to your road, and good luck to your homecoming."

As adventurous as you have perhaps proven to be, your feet become more eager when you turn for home. When travelling to a Sanctuary you have already opened, you may add your Wisdom score to your **Travel** roll results. Additionally, if you are spending a Fellowship phase at home and you choose the *Heal Corruption* undertaking you are always allowed to choose a second Fellowship phase undertaking.

Cultural Rewards - Men of Bree

Bree has no Mathom-house, and there are no great store of weapons and armour in the nearby villages. But the Barrow-downs are just a stone's throw away, and the Greenway leads directly to Deadmen's Dike...

Gatekeeper's Lantern

A number of very ancient metal lanterns are kept in working order by the gatekeepers of Bree. Shaped like some curious shellfish, their craftsmanship is long lost, as is the cunning art that makes their light particularly bright and enduring. The nature of the liquid fuel they use is a secret that the gatekeepers guard jealously. If you wield a Gatekeeper's Lantern in combat while in the dark, all creatures with the *Fear of Fire* or *Hate Sunlight* special abilities lose 2 points of Hate at the end of the first round.

Pipe of the Prancing Pony

The sign of a worthy hero of Breeland, the black clay pipes of the Prancing Pony are deemed to be authentic relics by the Men of Bree, as their manufacture hearkens back to the time when the art of smoking the genuine pipe-weed first spread out of Bree. Recognisable by their long stem and large firebox, smoking a pipe of the Prancing pony is said to give great powers of contemplation. When making a roll using **Riddle** while smoking this pipe, roll the Feat die twice and keep the best result. Additionally, you maintain your Standing rating during a Year's End Fellowship phase by spending half the required Treasure points (see *The One Ring Roleplaying Game*, page 193).

Shield of the First Men (great shield)

These large, brightly-painted tall shields are handed down as heirlooms from one generation to the next, in a tradition that the elders of Breeland say stretches back to the first Men to cross the Mountains and settle in these lands east of the Sea. Old tales say that a man carrying such a shield in the thick of a fight should fear nothing. When you are fighting in a Forward stance carrying a Shield of the First Men, if you get a ᚠ on the Feat die on an attack roll, all attacks aimed at you the following Loremaster turn are considered to fail automatically.

- Old Bones - and Skin

- **When:** The company may undertake this quest at any time.
- **Where:** The adventure begins in Bree and is set in the lands around it.
- **What:** The company battle a corpse-eating Troll that scavenges bones from the graveyard at Bree, and in doing so has inadvertently stolen the key to a greater treasure.
- **Why:** The companions are intrigued by rumours heard in the common-room of The Prancing Pony, and alarmed when Tomas Heatherton bursts in.
- **Who:** The key characters in this tale are the recently deceased Timeas Heatherton, his nephew Tomas Heatherton and the Old Troll.

"Troll sat alone on his seat of stone,
And munched and mumbled a bare old bone;"

Parts of this adventure allude to Sam Gamgee's song of the Troll, so in an ideal situation, this adventure would take place so many years prior to Year 3018 of the Third Age that the events described herein might have passed into Hobbit folklore. However, this concern is purely a conceit of the writer, and has no material bearing on the tale...

Adventuring Phase

This adventure can be used as the beginning of a campaign set in Eriador for a company of Bree-folk, Hobbits and perhaps the occasional Dwarf. A more experienced company, or one containing Rangers of the North or Elves of Rivendell can also play this adventure, but they have the ability to take a more direct approach when it comes to swordplay.

This adventure is divided into eight parts. The last few parts are optional; the company may choose not to risk further danger by disturbing yet more graves, in which case the treasure of the so-called 'Black Barrow' will remain buried in the darkness.

Part One - Stories by the Fire

In the inn at Bree, the company learn the latest gossip about the shameful behaviour of the late Timeas Heatherton's youngest nephew, Tomas. They are interrupted when Tomas himself comes running into the inn, scared white as a sheet by the horrors he beheld in the graveyard.

Part Two - The Nephew's Tale

Questioned by the company, the panicked young Tomas tells all he knows, and more.

Part Three - As Should Be A-Lying In Graveyard

Investigating Bree's graveyard, the company discover that a Troll has been raiding the graves for food.

Part Four - Over The Misty Mounds

Pursuing the Troll, the company enter the cold lands of the South Downs, where the Troll makes its lair. Before they can find it, however, they are scattered by a thick fog.

Part Five - Up Came Tom With His Big Boots On

Reunited, the company find the Troll's lair; but Tom Heatherton has found his way there too, and his attempts to steal his uncle's map meet result in added peril for the adventurers! The company must somehow defeat the Troll, through strength of arms or deception or a little of both.

Part Six - Old Skins and Sins

The company discover old Timeas' map is of Dwarf-make, and find the secret of the smoke-letters.

Part Seven - Finding the Barrow

The company follow the map through the Midgewater Marshes to find the Black Barrow and its lost treasures.

Part Eight - Though Dead He Be, It Belongs to Me

Grór the Dwarf arrives, possibly in the company of one of the Heathertons, and definitely with armed followers in train. He attempts to claim the barrow for his own, and take revenge for the death of his brother Grón.

Epilogue - Of Blood and Bone, Of Water and Earth

The company reflect on the events of the adventure, and gather what rewards they can from the ruin.

- Part One - Stories by the Fire

The adventure begins at The Prancing Pony. The common-room of inn is the heart of Bree, and as anyone knows (anyone in Bree, that is), that means it's the heart of the world, the fixed point around which Sun and Moon and Stars all spin on their merry courses. It was here that Thorin Oakenshield met Gandalf the Grey and so set the Quest of Erebor in motion.

Tonight, the talk is of matters closer to home than the Lonely Mountain – the scandal of the Heathertons. As anyone, and therefore everyone, in Bree knows, Timeas Heatherton was a fine fellow in his old age; always ready to stand his round in the Pony, always with a smile on his face and a kind word to passers-by. Only the older souls in Bree remembered a time when Timeas was not so upstanding a citizen of the town. While it's true that Timeas was once an odd sort who went off, they say, travelling away East, he put all that behind him when he came home to Bree, and lived a proper unexciting life from the day he came home until last month, when he died.

The scandal of the hour is Timeas' youngest nephew Tomas. The young man missed his own uncle's funeral; when he should have been helping carry his uncle's body to the graveyard outside Bree, he was nowhere to be seen – a matter of great scandal and general comment among the worthies of Bree! Have you ever heard a more shameful thing, for a nephew to miss his own uncle's burial?

Some in the room hint darkly that there is even more to the tale, deeds so foul and terrible they can only be spoken of over another pint of beer (for no man would dare speak of them wholly sober).

A successful roll of **Riddle** (or the expenditure of a point of Treasure to buy a round for the whole inn) garners the following added information:

- In his day, old Timeas wasn't merely *travelling*– it's said he was *adventuring*, with strange and unwholesome fellows. From his adventures, he brought back a fair amount of coin, enough to keep him in comfort for many years, and he shared little enough of it with his family.

- They found young Tomas after the funeral searching his late uncle's house. He'd torn the place apart, no doubt looking for buried treasure. Tomas' father threw the boy out onto the street, and he hasn't been seen all day!

- Timeas died a week ago, and was buried two days ago.

- One fellow claims that Timeas was *murdereded*, and that the murderer might not have been *human*. He claims that he saw strange lights and maybe even *Wights* lurking outside Timeas' house a few days ago.

Strangers in the Inn

Travellers from Wilderland crossing to the Blue Mountains or other points West must inevitably stop in Bree, and so might be present in the common room on this night. Rangers, equally, visit the inn to eavesdrop on gossip and rest in a bed for once.

If you need to fill the common-room with guests on the fly, roll on the Guests in the Inn table on page 29.

Old Timeas' Shady Past

Asking about Timeas' travels when he was younger means talking to one old fellow whose combination of age and drunkenness demands a Courtesy test to have the patience to extract anything useful out of his ramblings. If successful, the greybeard recalls that once Timeas returned to Bree in the company of a Ranger, of all people, but that wasn't who he used to leave Bree with. Indeed, the old man recalls having the impression that the Ranger had rescued Timeas from his former companions.

Other Rumours

Despite a few wild stories about how much Timeas brought back from his travels, it's clear (from an **Insight** or **Riddle** test) that the Heathertons were never especially rich. On a few occasions – when harvests were especially bad, or when there was another mouth to feed in the house – Timeas would vanish for a few days, and return with a bag of old coins, always just enough to tide the family over the bad times. He never revealed where he got this treasure, and each time claimed that this was the last of it.

Other tales that the company might hear mention:

- One farmer, Ernest Mugwort, complains that his hens have stopped laying. He thinks that one of them Rangers crept into his barn a few nights and scared the hens. The straw in the barn smelled very bad for days afterwards, which is how he knows it must have been a *Ranger*, what with all the time they spend tromping around the Midgewater Marshes and other foul places.

Any character with a suitable Trait (*Troll-lore, Eriador-lore*) can guess from the description that the culprit might have been a Troll. Such monsters often take shelter in barns and other outhouses to hide from the light of the sun.

- One of the Bree-folk complains that Timeas Heatherton died owing him six coppers, which was very inconsiderate of him, because it's clear that the old man knew he was dying. Why, he made his own funeral arrangements and paid for the undertaker in advance!

A companion who is *Suspicious, Clever* or *Secretive* might guess that Timeas had specific instructions relating to the disposal of his remains.

The Sullen Dwarf

Sitting in a corner of the inn is a sullen-faced Dwarf, his face hidden in the shadows of his cowl and the curls of his beard. He gives the impression that his entire attention is focused on the stein of beer in front of him, but his ears prick up whenever Timeas' name is mentioned. This Dwarf's name is Grór, and he is part of the company of treasure hunters and brigands that Timeas once travelled with.

The Shadow of the Past

In his youth, Timeas was part of a band of treasure hunters led by a villain named Gorlanc, who roved around Eriador and the north looking for buried treasures and relics of the lost kingdoms. On one such expedition, Timeas accompanied two other members of the company, a man named Egri and a Dwarf named Grón, on a search for a place that Gorlanc called the Black Barrow.

They found the hidden barrow, and Grón made a map of the tomb's location, but the company fell to quarrelling over the treasure. Grón killed Egri, and Timeas killed Grón and fled the barrow in terror. He nearly died in the Midgewater Marshes, but was found and rescued by the Rangers. Ashamed, he confessed everything he knew about Gorlanc's company to the Rangers. They returned him to Bree, then drove Gorlanc's followers out of Eriador.

Secretly, Timeas kept the map showing the location of the buried tomb. He never dared loot this tomb completely, fearing both the curses of the dead and the enmity of the living, especially the surviving members of his company or the Rangers, who kept an eye on him when they could spare it. It is this map that both young Tomas and Grór seek, and the Old Troll now possesses. Now, Gorlanc has returned to the North, and he has not forgotten Timeas though more than thirty winters have passed. He is still searching for the treasure of the Black Barrow and has sent one of his agents, the Dwarf Grór (brother of Grón) to Bree to spy on Timeas and learn what the old man remembered of the hidden barrow. The shock of seeing the face of the Dwarf he murdered (for Grór and Grón look very much alike) hastened Timeas' death, as surely as if some ghost had visited him in the night...

He just listens to the conversation. If any of the companions try speak to Grór, he drains his cup, belches rudely and hurries upstairs to his room. Otherwise, he vanishes in the uproar that accompanies Tomas' arrival (see **Alarums and Incursions**, below).

Grór follows the company once they leave Bree. He is sufficiently cautious and stealthy to avoid detection, and the company's headlong pursuit of the Troll ensures there is no time to set an ambush for him. See **The Footpad** sidebar on page 54.

Alarums and Incursions

Suddenly, the door of The Pony bursts open, and in rushes a young Bree-lander. The mutterings of the company make it clear that this young man is the infamous Tomas Heatherton. He's white as a sheet, and starts jabbering about ghosts and monsters in the graveyard. From his babbling, it's clear that he witnessed something horrible.

If the player-heroes rush to the graveyard immediately, then they'll be accompanied by half the patrons of the inn, eager to witness the latest instalment in the ongoing saga of the Heathertons. Skip on to Part Three – As Should Be A-Lying in the Graveyard, and run Part Two – The Nephew's Tale if the company return to question Tomas.

However, if the company take Tomas aside, calm him down and question him quietly, the patrons in the common room lose interest once it becomes clear that Tomas isn't going to do anything else shocking in the near future, and the characters can slip out unseen later on.

- Part Two - The Nephew's Tale

The ensuing scene, in which the company speak to Tomas, is played out as an encounter. The company need to win his trust if they are to find out as much as they can about events in the graveyard. Just how far Tomas will work with them is determined by the Outcome of the Encounter. There's also the possibility that Tomas' father, Nick Heatherton may also become involved in events.

Set Tolerance
The starting Tolerance for this encounter is based on the highest Wisdom rating in the company.

Evaluating the Outcome of the Encounter
Keep track of the number of successful rolls made by the player-heroes as normal. The more successful rolls, the more willing Tomas is to trust the company.

Introduction
Instead of making regular introductions, the companions first need to calm the panicked young man down. A successful Inspire test will easily do this.

Interaction
Successful rolls of **Riddle** or **Persuade** gets Tomas to give a more accurate account of what just happened. He offers one of the following facts for every success:

- Tomas saw a ghost in the graveyard. It looked right at him! He was so scared he nearly fainted! The next thing he knew, he was running in the door of the inn!
- The ghost was huge! Grey-skinned, nine or ten feet tall despite being all hunched over, and it smelled like rotten meat. (A **Hunting** or **Lore** test, use of an appropriate Trait, or simple common sense, suggests that he's describing a Troll, not an unquiet spirit.)
- He thinks it was scrabbling around in the dirt, as if looking for something. It didn't chase him – it must still be in the graveyard!
- He was in the graveyard to dig up the body of his uncle, Timeas.

That last admission will doubtless prompt other questions. Rolls of **Insight**, **Awe** or **Persuade** can be used to draw Tomas out on this topic. Again, he offers one fact for every success:

- Tomas' late Uncle Timeas was a former treasure hunter and always had money when he needed it.
- Timeas had a map that pointed the way to a buried fortune. It's hidden somewhere in Bree-land; Timeas would go to the buried hoard when he needed coin.
- The map wasn't among Timeas' belongings, or in the house. Tomas thinks his uncle must have arranged to be buried with the map.
- He doesn't know why Timeas didn't leave the map to his family, but suspects that his uncle was trying to protect his kin; the hoard may be located somewhere perilous.

Courtesy or **Awe** convinces Tomas to admit what he was doing in the graveyard:

- He brought a shovel and intended to dig up his uncle's grave to find the map.
- He fears that the ghost manifested to punish him for grave robbing.
- The adventurers, though, they look like courageous souls who do not fear any ghosts. If they help him get the map, he'll split Timeas' treasure with them! He claims that only he knows how to interpret his uncle's marks and codes – the map is useless without him (a roll of **Insight** or **Riddle**, or a *Cunning, Suspicious*, *Just* or *Wary* hero, suggests Tomas is lying on this point).

Evaluating the Outcome of the Encounter
The split Tomas offers depends on the number of successes obtained by the player-heroes.

1: Tomas doesn't trust the adventurers – he promises them a fair share of the treasure, but he'll betray them if he gets the opportunity and steal the map for himself.

2-4: Tomas offers them a quarter-share of the treasure. It's his inheritance, he says, and a quarter-share is generous beyond measure.

5-6: An even share – half for them, half for him.

7+: Take it all! Well, take 3/4s. Just save him from from the burning red eyes of the ghost!

Tomas suggests returning to the graveyard to drive away the ghost and recover Timeas' body and the map.

Tomas Heatherton
Young Tom Heatherton is a strapping youth, with a mop of dark hair and the start of what might be a beard one day. Like most young men, he fancies himself to be wiser, cleverer and more dangerous than his elders. For

a Bree-lander, he's impatient and ambitious, and dreams of travelling over the mountains to distant lands like Dale, and using his uncle's fortune to set himself up as a merchant prince.

When playing Tomas, talk big and bold when you're feeling safe, then scream and run away when danger threatens. He's not completely cowardly, but is completely unseasoned and impetuous.

Attribute Level: 2
Specialities: Burglary, Cooking
Distinctive Features: Reckless, Tall
Relevant Skills: Stealth ♦♦♦, Craft ♦♦
Endurance: 16

A Father's Wisdom

Depending on where the company speak with Tom Heatherton, they may be interrupted by the arrival of his father, Nick Heatherton, a farmer of Bree. Nick wears a black cloak as a mark of mourning for his late brother Timeas.

"Boy," he calls to Tom, *"enough of this foolishness. You've brought enough shame on my house without dragging these good folk into our affairs."*

"It's not your house, dad," spits back Tom. *"Uncle Tim paid for it, as well you know. You might be too scared to claim what's ours now that Tim's gone, but I'm not."*

"You don't know what you're talking about, boy. Stay silent." To the company, Nick says *"This matter ain't any concern of yours. I don't know what nonsense my son's been saying, but 'tis better to leave well enough alone. Here, for your troubles, a few coins."* He offers the company 1 Treasure to abandon the adventure.

Tom begs the company to ignore his father. *"I know what I saw, and I know such things won't leave well enough alone. We must return to the graveyard and put it right."*

Questioning Nick Heatherton

The farmer has little interest in bandying words with strangers about his troublesome son or his recently-deceased brother. **Insight** suggests he's ashamed or even scared of his brother's legacy, and worried that his hot-headed son is about to get into trouble. With **Courtesy** or **Inspire**, the company can get a few half-answers out of Nick Heatherton.

- His brother Timeas was wealthy – or, more precisely, knew where to get money. Timeas always hinted that there was a lot more wealth available, but that obtaining it would be somehow perilous.

- Timeas travelled with strange and dangerous folk, but he put that part of his life behind him long ago. Nick wants to ensure that young Tom does not go down a similar road.

- He begs the company to keep Tom safe. He just buried his brother; he hopes he doesn't have to bury his son too.

Nick actually knows a great deal more than he is willing to say; he is the one who buried the map with his brother, and he knows about Tim's travels with Gorlanc's company.

- Part Three -
As Should Be A-Lying In Graveyard

The people of Bree bury their dead on a hillside south of the Great East Road. As they have done since time immemorial, they raise mounds of earth over the corpses, and let the grass be their shroud. Those steeped in ancient lore can tell you that the oldest mounds are oriented to the north, towards Bree-hill and points beyond, and the newer mounds look back towards the West, towards the setting sun and the Undying Lands.

The mounds are not like the great barrows of the kings; they are little earthen piles covered in green grass, just long enough to house a corpse.

The graveyard is within sight of the lights of Bree, but is about ten minutes' walk outside the town's gates. A well-worn path, lined with flowers, runs between the South-gate of Bree and the little cemetery.

Old Timeas' Grave

The newest mound, a spot of brown among the sea of green, is that of Timeas Heatherton. Examining it, it's clear that the mound has been recently opened and then closed up again. If the companions open the grave (committing a Misdeed worth a point of Shadow!) they find it empty. The body is gone. Something opened up the mound, stole the corpse, and sealed it up again so expertly that the earth looks undisturbed at a casual glance.

If present, Tomas insists on making a careful search of the barrow, to no avail – there's no sign of any map.

Searching the Graveyard

A successful **Search** test turns up a spade (which Tomas apologetically claims as his) and little else. It takes a great or extraordinary success to find the traces of the Troll: a few trampled blades of grass and mostly erased footprints. For a Troll, this one must be exceedingly canny and stealthy. Still, it's enough to track with a **Hunting** test. Following this trail leads to **Part Four – Over The Misty Mounds**.

If the heroes fail to spot the traces, they have two other ways to find the trail. First, if they think of it, they could visit the nearby barn mentioned by the farmer in The Prancing Pony for another chance to find the trail (again, **Search** at TN16).

The second option is to stake out the graveyard and wait for the Troll to return. Anyone with the *Troll-lore* Trait can guess that the creature will return for more well-aged meat. Some Trolls prefer corpses that have had some time to rot, so it's unlikely to eat all of Uncle Timeas right away.

Many Onlookers

If a crowd from The Prancing Pony followed the player-heroes to the graveyard, then the **Search** test automatically fails as drunken onlookers trample any possible tracks, accuse young Tom of grave robbing and shout in alarm when they mistake a passing goat for a ghost, or a Troll, or whatever monster they imagine stalks this graveyard at night.

Staking out the Graveyard

The Troll is gone for the night, and won't return for several more. The only thing to do is stake out the graveyard, which means maintaining a series of watches over the coming days. Tomas will suggest this course of action if the players don't think of it. If the company are on good terms with Tomas, he offers to pay for their lodgings at The Pony if they promise to help him track down the Troll that took his uncle's body.

The most reasonable way to stake out the graveyard is to take watches, where one adventurer stands vigil over the mounds for a few hours before rousing a companion. If the whole company wishes to spend several cold, sleepless nights sitting on a wet hillside in Bree, they can do so, but each companion gains 4 Fatigue.

At this time of year, thick fogs are common across the Downs. The fog rolls around the graveyard, turning the mounds into little islands of green in a sea of white before swallowing them entirely. It's hard to see any distance, so any watchers must rely on their hearing, listening for the bellows-breath of the Troll, for the soft scraping of spade-like paws in the earth, for the crunch of bones. Call for an **Awareness** test from the watcher.

Failure: The stealthy Old Troll manages to sneak up on the watchman, and attacks with the advantage of surprise. A single player-hero versus a Troll is likely to be a very one-sided battle; the character is advised to flee, knowing the Troll will not pursue them into Bree. If there's more than one watchman, pick the tastiest one.

Success: The character spots that the Troll has returned when the Troll is nearly on top of them! They may hide from the Troll with a **Stealth** test until the monster moves away.

If the **Stealth** test is successful, the Troll sniffs the air, growls, mutters something about a strange smell and then heads into the graveyard to dig up another juicy body. The player-hero may then sound the alarm, as described below.

If the **Stealth** test fails, then the Troll spots the hiding watchmen and attacks.

Great Success: The watchman spies the Troll at a distance. The watchman can sound the alarm, summoning the whole company. The Troll flees, with the company in hot pursuit. Alternatively, the company can try to ambush the Troll with a **Stealth** test to get into position. If successful, the company can force a battle with the Troll here and now.

Extraordinary Success: Keen indeed are the eyes of the watch! The watchman spots the Troll at such a distance that there's time to sneak back to Bree, summon the rest of the company, and return to encircle it without needing to make **Stealth** tests. Indeed, they even have enough time to make preliminary Battle rolls to earn advantages.

If the Old Troll is allowed to go about his grisly business without interruption, then he digs out one of the other mounds, removes the half-rotten body inside (*"just about ripe,"* he mutters, *"ain't nothing like nicely aged meat"*) and stuffs it into a sack before vanishing into the mists.

Battling the Old Troll

Depending on how the stake-out went, this battle may involve:

- One or two unlucky watchmen ambushed by the Troll.
- The whole company charging into battle with the Troll.
- The company ambushing the Troll.

In any case, it's clear that this is an old and dangerous Stone-troll, cunning and fast beyond the common measure of his kind. The Old Troll's pale hide is marked by many scars; beneath his goat-skin jerkin he wears an old coat of ring-mail, rusty and tattered but still proof against blows, and he carries a knife (in the hands of a man it would be a sword).

The Old Troll fights until reduced to half his starting Endurance (40), until Wounded, or until he fears being surrounded and brought down by weight of numbers. Remember, from his perspective, the graveyard at Bree is just a convenient source of tasty food. To him, the body in the bag is like a sweet honeycomb, but he's not going to risk his life poking a beehive if the bees are swarming. You don't get to be an Old Troll by staying in a losing fight.

So, at a suitable moment, the Old Troll attempts to use his Fell Speed special ability to escape the combat at the start of the next round. He leaps over the head of one of his

That Was Easy... Too Easy!

It's unlikely to happen, but it's certainly possible that a combination of extraordinary successes and Piercing Blows could kill the Old Troll before he gets a chance to run away. If this happens, the players still have to find the Old Troll's lair. There's no sign of Timeas' map on the corpse of the Old Troll, so it will be in his lair if it's anywhere.

Run Part Four – Over the Misty Mounds without the pressure of the chase, and when the companions get to Part Five, replace the late Old Troll with his elder brother, the Older Troll, who's none too happy about the death of his baby brother. The Older Troll has *Hatred* for any player characters who Wounded his brother.

foes and scrambles away into the fog. Note down the Old Troll's remaining Endurance when he flees the fight – he regains 12 Endurance between now and **Part Five** of the adventure. If he's Wounded, he stays Wounded.

The Old Troll

"My lad," said Troll, "this bone I stole.
But what be bones that lie in a hole?
Thy nuncle was as a lump o' lead,
Afore I found his shin-bone."

How old is the Old Troll? Not even he knows. The Trolls, it is said, were made in mockery of the Ents, and Ents live long indeed. Even the counterfeits of the Enemy might measure their lifespans in centuries or longer.

The Old Troll's chainmail and knife come from the forges of long-vanished Angmar, and he vaguely recalls fighting in one war or another, but the details are as hazy and forgotten as his true name. He is, as far as he can recall, the oldest of the Trolls of Eriador.

Play him as a sort of monstrous parody of Tom Bombadil, if Tom were a corpse-eating monstrosity. He cares for nothing except for mastery of his own little domain and his own appetites, and entertains himself by gurgling grim little ditties about crunching bones and smashing skulls.

The Old Troll:

Attribute Level	
7	
Endurance	Hate
80	7
Parry	Armour
6	4d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 4	Custom, 3
Perception, 2	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Troll-Knife	4
Crush	2
Special Abilities	
Great Size	Horrible Strength
Fell Speed*	Deadly Misfortune
Reckless Hate	-

*This special ability reflects the Troll's superior battle-savvy and surprising quickness rather than any powers of flight or supernatural movement. For this reason, the Troll is limited to attack only heroes fighting in a close combat stance, and must succeed at a Movement test (TN 14) at the beginning of a round to abandon combat or disengage and engage a different opponent.

Deadly Misfortune: Trolls don't normally know any magic, but the Old Troll learned a few tricks out of Angmar. If a character rolls an on any roll while in the vicinity of the Old Troll's lair, then the Old Troll may spend a point of Hate. If he does, then one of the piles of bones suddenly slips and collapses on top of the character, crashing and clattering down very loudly. The Troll gains 2 bonus dice that can only be used against that foe. This ability is only usable when the Old Troll is near his lair (see page 58).

Reckless Hate: The Old Troll may spend 1 point of Hate to recover a number of Endurance points equal to its Attribute level (up to its maximum Endurance rating).

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Troll-Knife (Short Sword)	5	10	14	-
Crush	Att. Level		12	-

Pursuing the Old Troll

The Old Troll runs on all fours, loping along at terrible speed, faster than any Man or Elf could run. A horse might be able to keep pace, but the Old Troll knows the land around Bree very well, and so takes a route that runs up sheer cliffs and through dense thickets and marshes. He flees away south, running for the South Downs.

The company may not be able to keep the Troll in sight, but now that they know roughly in which direction his lair might be found, they can pursue him across the countryside. They also have one key advantage – they can travel by day or night, but the Troll must find shelter to avoid the light of the Sun, or be turned to stone. The Old Troll knows every barn, gully, cave and hole from Deadman's Dike to Tharbad; he knows where to hide from the killing light.

- Part Four - Over The Misty Mounds

The Old Troll's lair is hidden some 50 miles south of Bree; three or four days' travel for a Man, but only two night's hard running for a Troll, for the stone-bred do not tire or tarry as mortals do. Trolls are by nature very lazy and territorial, which makes them slow, but when they have to run, they run as though the dawn were behind them.

This stage of the adventure is a journey from Bree to the Old Troll's lair, but it is possible that the company might catch the Old Troll before he reaches his home. The company don't know exactly where they are going, so they don't get to make preliminary rolls. As the company need to move as fast as possible to catch the Troll, any Fatigue test sees its difficulty raised by one level (already calculated in the journey notes below)..

The first part of the journey is easy; the lands just south of the Road are still farmland, or at least the stones remember being tilled when the region was more populous; many paths still criss-cross the countryside.

- 20 miles of travel from Bree south of the Road takes the company to the edge of the South Downs. It takes them 1 day.

By noon on the second day, however, the company find themselves climbing into the stony hills of the South Downs; a monotonous, rolling landscape where each pile of shale and scanty grass hides another dozen hills, all alike. The paths in this part of the world are treacherous; valleys end suddenly in box canyons, and the loose stones are always eager to twist an ankle or trap a foot. This is Troll country, and you need to be made of stone to be at home here.

- It's another 20 miles of travel into the South Downs to the area around where the Troll lairs. This takes them 2 days, and 1 Fatigue test at TN16.

If Tomas is with the company, he acquits himself surprisingly well. The young Bree-lander is not an experienced traveller, but he is young and tough, and as long as there are no sudden dangers, he keeps pace with the player-heroes.

The Footpad

At various points in this adventure, the company may be followed by either Tomas Heatherton or Grór the Dwarf, depending on the circumstances of their departure from Bree. In either case, the pursuer stays clear of the company and cannot easily be ambushed. If the company's Look-out Man or Hunter gets a great or extraordinary success on, respectively, an Awareness or Hunting roll, then they find signs of the pursuer, alerting the company to their shadow.

It's up to the Loremaster as to whether you wish to allow the player-heroes to catch their footpad. The simplest approach is to say that the pursuer always evades capture, or to counter the company's attempts by some external calamity like a Troll attack. On the other hand, if you feel comfortable improvising the later sections, you could allow the company to capture their pursuer with a successful roll of Hunting test (TN12 for Tomas, TN20 for the wily Grór.)

The Trail of the Troll

At the start of the chase, the company are hot on the Troll's heels and have a chance to catch him before he reaches his lair. However, Hazard episodes may cause the company to temporarily lose the trail and force them to search for it again when light breaks over the Downs. Each day, the company's Huntsman may make a Hunting roll (TN16). Cross-reference the result on the table below.

Hazard Suggestions

Lost the Trail (Huntsman – Fatigue)
The company lose the trail of the Old Troll, and the Huntsman must search around to find it again. On a failure, the Huntsman adds Fatigue again, twice on the roll of an , representing a day squandered following false trails and doubling back.

Troll-path (Scout – Fatigue or Wound)
The Old Troll has taken a route that only a Troll could traverse safely: up a steep cliff, through thick brambles or across marshy ground. The Scout has a choice: do they lead the company on the same Troll-path, or risk delay by finding a safer alternative route?

If the Scout chooses to take the Troll-path, then each member of the company must make a **Travel** roll or else lose Endurance equal to the roll of a Success die, or a Wound on the roll if failed with an .

If the Scout looks for another route, they must make an **Explore** test. With a success, the chase continues unabated. With a failure, the company each add Fatigue and *still* have to cross the Troll-path as above, as there's no other way to follow the trail.

Thick Mists (Guide – Dangerous Meeting)
Thick mists roll in over the Downs from the West. If the company continue, they risk becoming lost and scattered. If they don't continue, they'll lose the Troll's trail and have to pick it up again in the morning. If the Guide chooses to press on, call for a **Travel** test. If this

Hunting the Troll:

Hunting roll	Lost the Trail	Has the Trail
Failure	The Troll gains 2 bonus dice when he next battles the company.	No effect.
Success	The company find the trail again, but the Troll gains 1 bonus die when he next battles the company.	The company find where the Troll was hiding during the day, but the monster escapes just before they can catch him. The Troll loses 1 bonus die when he next battles the company (or, if he has no dice left, the company gain 1 bonus die)
Great or Extraordinary Success	The company find the trail again.	The company catch the Troll.

test fails, the company gets separated and scattered. Pick one companion to be ambushed by the Old Troll, as per **Staking out the Graveyard** on page 50.

Night Terrors (Look-out – Misery)
The Look-out Man's eyes seem to be playing tricks on them. Every hillock and rock looks like the Troll. As the moonlight plays over the Downs, it is as though the Troll is everywhere. Ask the player how attentive they intend to be – are they going to stay on-edge and fully alert all night, fraying their nerves, or will they put aside their worries and just make sure that no foes trouble the sleeping companions?

If the Look-out strains their eyes all night, add 2 Fatigue and call for an **Awareness** test. On a success, they spot the Troll moving in the distance. On a failure, or if they watch only the immediate area instead of peering off into the darkness, the Look-out doesn't spot the Troll moving and the company lose the trail. The Look-out is temporarily Miserable until the Troll's trail is found again.

March by Night (All Companions – Fatigue)
Sun sets over the Downs, and it's clear that the Troll is well ahead of the company. Soon, when the daylight is gone completely, the Troll will emerge from his hiding place and consolidate his lead over the company. To have a chance of catching the Troll, they need to march by night.

If they do not do so, they temporarily lose the Troll's trail.

If the company decides to march by night, call for a **Travel** test from everyone, adding Fatigue on a failure (or twice if they fail with an .

Catching the Troll

If the company catch up with the Old Troll, then they come to some noisome cave or lightless gully in the Downs where he has taken refuge. The company still have a few minutes of daylight left, so they can either enter the Troll's hiding place and attack, or else wait outside and set an ambush.

If they enter into the hiding place, then the Troll has to survive for three rounds of combat before it can flee into the twilight. If they wait outside, then the company may make preliminary rolls and ambush the Troll when it bursts out and flees.

Keep track of the Troll's Endurance; when the company finally corner the Old Troll in his lair, any Endurance he's lost stays lost.

The Ranger

This is an optional encounter that has limited impact on this adventure, but foreshadows events in future tales.

As the company march across the Downs, they spot a figure in a grey cloak, walking west. It's unusual to meet anyone in this wilderness; anyone travelling in this part of Eriador would take the great East Road or the Greenway, unless they had a specific and doubtless sinister reason to stay out of sight. One lone traveller is unlikely to be a bandit, though, so the company may greet this stranger without undue fear.

Any Rangers recognise the woman by her gait; she is Haleth, a fellow Dúnadan, famed for her skill with the sword. Her usual haunts are far to the east, where she guards Rivendell and the valley of the Greyflood from Orcs and Trolls.

Today, she is on an errand for the Rangers that cannot wait, and so she cannot stop to accompany the companions unless they are in very dire need. (She might help the characters find the trail of the Troll again, or show up to rescue a player-hero who got ambushed by the Troll or wandered away from the rest of the company).

If there are any Rangers of the North or Elves in the company, then Haleth stops to speak with the company. Otherwise, she stays to talk only if the company's speaker makes a **Courtesy** test to convince her that they are worth talking to.

- She's encountered the Old Troll before – the brute trespassed close to Rivendell some twenty years ago, and she was part of the hunting party that drove him away (*"I'm older than I look"*, she says wryly). She recalls that the Troll was especially dangerous near his lair. He marks the territory around his lair with some foul spells.

- She's also heard of Timeas, and recalls his trouble with bad company. Any treasure map he had may be more perilous than any Troll. She suggests that the company should give any such map to someone they can trust (like Gandalf or Elrond, if the company know such exalted figures; another Ranger, if they don't), or that they destroy it. Some treasures are best left unfound.

If anyone makes a roll of **Insight** (or has a trait like Wary), they see that Tomas is angered by Haleth's words of caution, but has enough sense not to insult a Ranger to her face.

Fog on the South Downs

As the company approach the Troll's lair, another bank of thick fog rolls in. This fog has an unwholesome, unnatural feel to it. As it approaches, it looms and lopes like the Old Troll, as though an army of misty monsters were advancing upon the company. The fog is so thick that the company risk being scattered.

If Tomas is with the company, then he is automatically lost in the fog. Other characters must make a **Search** test to find one another in the fog. A character who fails is lost and alone as they enter the area around the Old Troll's lair. A character who succeeds finds one of his companions, chosen at random, before entering into the Old Troll's demesne; a great success indicates they have found two companions; an extraordinary success, three.

- Part Five - Up Came Tom With His Big Boots On

The Old Troll's lair is a deep cave in the lee of one of the mounds of the South Downs. For a furlong or more around the cave, he's stacked piles of bones and skulls as warding totems against intruders. Closer to the cave, these piles grow in size; the teetering bone-piles near the cave entrance are taller than a tall man. The wind whistles through these grisly landmarks, keening like a banshee. This is a dark place, a place of shadow. All those who enter the Old Troll's demesne must make a Corruption test or gain a point of Shadow.

There are several ways this scene might begin, and several ways it might play out. (Remember, if the company have already killed the Old Troll, then his older brother the Older Troll takes his place in this scene).

The company see the Troll when they arrive. He's slumped on a seat of stone at the entrance to the cave, breathing heavily, exhausted by the long chase. There's a skin of wine and most of a roasted goat by his side.

Tomas' Folly

The first problem is that young Tomas Heatherton has arrived ahead of the company and is currently trying to sneak into the Troll's lair to search for his uncle's bones and the map. Tomas is not especially stealthy, but how hard can it be to sneak past a sleeping Troll?

A successful **Insight** or **Awareness** roll from a companion reveals that the Troll is only pretending to sleep. His red eyes glitter beneath their heavy lids. He's dozing, but not asleep. However, the Troll hasn't spotted Tomas yet. (If, by some quirk of your game, Tomas isn't here, then the company don't need to worry about the boy and can instead focus on the Troll.)

What do the company do?

- **Do Nothing:** If the company choose not to act and see what happens, here's how things play out. Tomas tries to sneak past the 'sleeping' Troll, but as he enters the cave, one of the piles of skulls topples in the wind and falls on top of him. Quick as a snake, the Troll springs up and grabs him. Tomas bravely demands that the Troll hand over his uncle's bones. *"Why, if thou craves thy nuncle so, then surely ye should find him!"* cries the Troll. He pulls Tomas taut, holding the boy by wrists and ankles, and then he twists.

  The sound of breaking bones echoes across the grim valley. All the company gain 2 Shadow points for standing idly by. The Troll tosses the hobbled Tomas into the back of the cave and returns to napping.

- **Rescue Tomas from his Folly:** The challenge is to sneak faster than Tomas, and grab the boy before he gets too close to the Troll. This requires a **Stealth**

test. If the companion fails, offer the choice of staying hidden and not reaching Tomas in time, or grabbing Tomas but being spotted by the Troll out in the open.

- **Use the Boy as a Distraction:** If the company wishes, they could use Tomas as a distraction when trying to steal from or ambush the Troll. Poor Tomas gets mangled and thrown into the back of the cave, as above; the player-heroes (heroes might no longer be the right word here...) gain 3 bonus dice for any **Stealth** tests made in this scene, and they gain 3 Shadow points instead of 2.

- **Confront the Old Troll:** Stepping out bravely into full view and hailing the Troll requires an **Awe** test. If the test fails, then the Old Troll grabs Tomas as a hostage before parleying with the company. If successful, then the Old Troll is so surprised by the player-hero's bold challenge that he doesn't spot Tomas.

- **Charge!** Battle is joined! If the player-heroes inflict at least 10 points of damage with their Opening Volley, then the Troll stumbles back, dismayed by the hail of fire. Otherwise, he grabs Tomas and uses the boy as a shield.

Stealing from the Troll

Sneaking past the Troll and getting into the cave requires a **Stealth** test at TN 16. If the test fails, the troll spots the intruder and attacks.

If successful, the character may pilfer one item from the Troll's lair (roll the Feat die on the **Contents of the Lair** table, on page 58). A great success allows for two rolls on the table, an extraordinary success yields three (roll again duplicate results). Alternatively, a character may attempt a **Search** test to find the map instead of taking a random item from the hoard.

Obviously, rolling an on the table means the precarious pile of bones topples over with a resounding crash, alerting the Old Troll.

Ambushing the Old Troll

The company might choose to get as close to the Troll as they can before attacking. Call for a **Stealth** test. Failure means the Troll spots the heroes creeping up on him and gets to spring an ambush of his own, leaping forward to attack.

Parleying with the Old Troll

The Old Troll is no fool. If the adventurers have tracked him back to his lair and already hurt him, then they're a danger to him. One lucky arrow, one blade that finds purchase in his stony skin, and he might die here. Treat this as an encounter.

Set Tolerance

The starting Tolerance for this encounter starts at 1. Increase it by 1 if the Old Troll's Endurance is 20 or less, or 2 if he is already Wounded. Increase the Tolerance by a further 1 if there's a Ranger of the North or an Elf in the company.

Introduction and Interaction

The Old Troll can be polite enough when he wants to be. If the companions approach him with **Courtesy**, he's willing to listen. The company could also stall with the **Riddle**-game, or offer a bargain with **Persuade** (perhaps cutting the Troll in for a share of Timeas' treasure).

If the Troll has Tomas as a hostage, then the company will need to persuade the Troll not to eat the boy, perhaps with an **Awe** or **Persuade** roll.

If the company ask for the return of Timeas' bones, the Troll grows suspicious. *"What was this man to thou? Why should thee care where his bones lie? What's this? A map? A map, aye – and a map to what, I ask thee?"*

Evaluating the Outcome of the Encounter

Count up the number of successes.

0-1: *"For a couple of pins, I'll eat thee too, and gnaw thy shins!"* The Troll breaks Tomas' bones and attacks!

2-4: The Old Troll offers to let Tomas go and not to return to the graveyard at Bree – as long as the company depart his lair and never return. As a creature of shadow, the Troll has no intention of keeping his vow forever, but the company can buy Bree a year of peace.

5-6: The Old Troll agrees to hand over the map, as long as the company bring him a third of the treasure as tribute. If the company agree, and then break their vow, that's a Misdeed worth 3 Shadow points (breaking an oath is normally worth 4 points, but it is a promise to a Troll!)

7+: The Old Troll is so impressed – or cowed – by the company that he offers them Timeas' bones and the choice of any other item from his hoard (including the map) if they leave him be.

I've a Mind to Dine on thee Now

The Old Troll attacks! He moves with terrifying speed and ferocity, hurling bones and rocks as he charges, roaring loud enough to make the dead quail. This is the final battle with the Troll – he won't flee from this fight. Remember to give the Old Troll any bonus dice he won during his flight from Bree (see page 51).

If the Troll has Tomas, he wields the boy like a shield, increasing his Parry by 4. A successful Called Shot can free Tomas from the Troll's grasp.

Remember to take advantage of the Old Troll's Deadly Misfortune – any mistakes the company make can be exploited to their fullest if the Troll spends 1 Hate to buy 2 bonus dice.

If slain, the Old Troll collapses amidst the bone-piles of his victims.

A companion could take the distraction bought by the battle to run into the cave and search for the map. Alternatively, if you need hope unlooked-for to rescue the company, then Haleth could join the company in battling the Old Troll.

The Contents of the Lair

The treasures of the lair, such as they are, are described in the **Contents of the Lair** table. If the company have killed or otherwise defeated the Troll, then there's no need to roll on the table – they can gather all the treasure stuffed into cracks and odd corners in the cave, and pile it high before dividing it. They find everything. (The full accounting of the treasure, using the Magical Treasure rules from the *Rivendell* supplement, is a comparatively paltry 40* plus another 29 that might be earned by returning items to their original owners).

On the other hand, if the company steal from the hoard piecemeal, roll on the table to see what they find.

Contents of the Lair:

Roll	Treasure Found
	A pile of skulls – which collapses when touched, alerting the Troll.
1	Nothing but well-gnawed bones.
2	A few skins of wine and a brace of stolen chickens – no treasure, but a good meal in the offing.
3	A few silver coins from Bree, used as toothpicks by the Troll (1 Treasure)
4	A merchant's purse. It contains a few real coins (1 Treasure) and a larger number of tin coins painted to look like silver (9 false Treasure)
5	The bones of a Dwarf. Hidden beneath these remains is a bag of coins (2 Treasure)*
6	A necklace of gold; crudely made, but valuable enough (2 Treasure).
7	A woman's ring (2 Treasure). Also, a woman's finger (0 Treasure).
8	A cunning puzzle-box of Dwarven make. Opening it requires a **Craft** test; inside is 7 Treasure and a letter which, if delivered to the Blue Mountains, carries with it a reward of another 5 Treasure.
9	A box containing cheap but well-wrought jewels and rings made by the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains (10 Treasure)
10	A coffin from Bree. The deceased was a notorious miser, who was buried with 15 Treasure. Taking money from the dead in this fashion is a Misdeed worth 1 Shadow point.
	Timeas' Map

Coin-counting players may object, and argue that a Troll's hoard usually contains ten times as much treasure. Remind such players that they just found a treasure map.

- Part Six -
Old Skins and Sins

The map was entombed with Timeas Heatherton, wrapped around one shin and stuffed down the boot he was buried in. Now, it's in the hands of the company (and Tomas Heatherton, if he's still alive).

The map is written on goatskin parchment, and depicts the area around Bree. There are no place-names on the map itself, just a few circles for towns and little pictures of trees and hills. Four lines converge at a cross-roads, and an arrow points towards the top of the map.

Around the borders of the map are runes, the *Angerthas Moria*, a mode of writing common to the Dwarves of the North.

Along the North edge of the map, they read HERE OF OLD WAS ARTHEDAIN LAST-KING.

Along the West, they read HERE ARE HALFLINGS IN MULTITUDE.

To the East, the top of the map, the runes read HERE OF OLD WAS THE ROAD TO DURIN'S GATES.

And finally, to the South, HENCE CAME THE COMPANY TO SEEK TREASURE.

From the nature of the runes, the company can easily guess it was made by a Dwarf, not by Timeas. That suggests that Timeas did not find the treasure himself; one of his erstwhile travelling companions found it, and he stole the map.

A successful roll of **Lore**, **Travel** or **Craft** (or a Trait like *Eriador-lore*) suggests it was made relatively recently, within the last twenty years or so. Timeas may have obtained it shortly before he returned to Bree from his mysterious travels.

If the map is Dwarf-made, then the arrow points east as is traditional for Dwarven-drawn charts. Turning the map on its side makes the geography plain – the map centres on Bree-land, which makes sense. Timeas used the map to bring home treasure again and again, and he was never gone from Bree for long.

A close examination of the map with **Craft** suggests that it was in a fire, or deliberately burnt in places by being held too close to a candle or torch.

Hidden Information

If Tomas is still with the company, then he scours the map, looking for a mark or a clue. He believed that there would be a clear sign on the map, like a nice big X marking the spot where his uncle's treasure lies, but there's no such mark. He desperately peers at the burnt marks, scraping them with a finger in the hopes that the ash will peel away and reveal more runes.

Questioning him prompts him to recall a memory. He remembers that his uncle always kept a candle in the box with the map, and took the candle with him whenever he went out to fetch money. It was a cheap, greasy, smoky candle too.

A Dwarf in the Company

A Dwarf player-hero may make a **Lore** or **Craft** test to recall the various forms of concealed writing that the Dwarves use: moon-letters, gem-letters, blood-letters, hearth-letters and so forth. Characters with a

Unlocking the Map's Secrets

If neither Tomas nor a Dwarf is in the company, the player-heroes may attempt to seek outside assistance. If they have time and a suitable ally or patron, they could visit someone more learned to ask about the map. Rivendell is a long way from Bree, but Elrond is something of an expert in these matters.

The company might visit the Shire, in the hopes that Gandalf (or even Bilbo Baggins, who is after all a famous burglar with considerable experience in Dwarven cartography) could help them. Any such patron can point out the existence of smoke-letters (although in Bilbo's case, the discovery is purely accidental; while examining the map, the gentle-hobbit chokes on his pipe and coughs smoke over the map, revealing the letters.)

Investigations in Bree

There are two possible lines of inquiry in Bree. First, if the company met Grór the Dwarf, they could ask him for advice on reading the map. Grór is only too happy to assist the company – it simplifies his task in finding Timeas' treasure immeasurably.

Alternatively, the company could talk to Nick Heatherton, Timeas' brother. The farmer is none too happy to hear from the adventurers again, but if they kept Tom alive despite his foolishness, he agrees to talk to them. He recalls that he once saw his brother wave a smoky candle over the map, and that letters magically appeared on it. Why, that's why he buried the map with Tim instead of burning it: he feared releasing some evil fire-spirit if the map burned. He urges the characters to hand over the map, or to weigh it down with stones and cast it into the river.

suitable Trait like *Rhymes of Lore* may also roll. A Dwarf who possesses the *Broken Spells* virtue automatically succeeds.

One such form of hidden writing is called *smoke-letters*. These invisible runes cause smoke to magically adhere to them, allowing them to be read briefly before a breeze carries the smoky shapes away.

The Smoke-letters

If the map is exposed to a source of smoke (even a pipe will do), then letters appear, marking a site in the Midgewater Marshes. The runes say "HERE LIES THE BLACK BARROW", and nearby "HERE IS THE KING'S CHAIR". The spot is only a few days' travel outside Bree.

A successful **Lore** test (TN16) recalls nothing of the 'Black Barrow', but the 'King's Chair' might be a reference to a stone chair in the midst of a ruin that lies half-sunk in the swamp. There was a mansion of some prince of one of the North-Kingdoms there once, long ago, and now all that remains is a weathered chair.

Tomas the Treacherous

If Tomas feels ill-done by the company – if they've stolen the map, or ignored him, or left him for dead in a Troll-hole, or just traded away too much of 'his' treasure hoard – then he may betray them by striking off on his own once again.

This time, he returns to Bree and falls in with Grór the Dwarf, who is only too glad to listen to the young man's tale of woe. Tomas then shows up in Part Eight – Though Dead He Be, It Belongs to Me! when Grór tries to claim the barrow.

- Part Seven -
Finding the Barrow

Now that the company are not chasing a Troll, they can take their ease on the return journey. The easiest route is to head west until they strike the Greenway, walking north to the crossroads, heading east along the Road, and then cutting north through the marsh to find this 'Black Barrow'.

- Travelling by road involves journeying 10 miles across the Downs to the Greenway, then 40 miles along the Greenway to Bree, and finally 30 miles east along the Road to the Midgewater Marshes. It takes them 3 days and a single Fatigue test at TN12

Visiting Bree

If the company pass through Bree again on the way to this 'Black Barrow', they may encounter Grór or Nick Heatherton again. If they meet Grór, call for an **Awareness** test from the most wary or suspicious companion. If successful, the player-hero spots Grór meeting in an alleyway with a local troublemaker, a brute of a Bree-lander called Ham Granger.

Into the Marshes

According to Timeas' map, the Black Barrow is near the 'King's Chair', around 50 miles north-west of Weathertop.

If the company knew exactly where they were going, then they could head straight for the spot and find the barrow quickly, but even with the King's Chair as a guide, finding one particular mound in a morass is going to take time.

- The expedition into the Marshes involves 40 miles of travel across daunting terrain. It takes the company 8 days of hard slog through the swamps and 2 Fatigue tests at TN14.

Hazard Suggestions

Caught in a Bog (Huntsman – Fatigue)
The Huntsman spots a wild boar crashing through the swamp. If they choose not to hunt the beast, the company goes hungry tonight, and everyone adds 1 Fatigue.

If the Huntsman pursues the quarry, the animal blunders into a pool of sucking mud and starts to drown. Recovering the beast from the mud requires an **Athletics** test. Fail, and the hunter adds Fatigue again (twice with an ᚠ) from the effort of trying to rescue the animal. Succeed, and the company eat well tonight!

Ghosts in the Fog (Scout – Corruption)
The Scout sees the mists hanging over the swamp twist and coil, and suddenly they seem to take on the form of ghostly soldiers marching in serried ranks.

Call for a Corruption test; if the Scout fails, they gain 1 point of Shadow (or 2 points on the roll of an ᚠ).

No Way Forward, No Way Back (Guide – Wrong Choices)
The Guide inadvertently brings the company by the wrong path, and there's no easy way to backtrack.

If the Guide fails a **Travel** test, another day is added to the travel time and the TN for further Fatigue tests is raised one level.

The Thief (Look-out Man)
At night, someone tries to steal Timeas' map. It might be one of Grór's thugs (see **Part Eight**), or Tomas, if he's estranged from the company. Alternatively, it might be a big black crow, who scented carrion smeared on the old parchment.

In any event, the Look-out must make an **Awareness** test to spot the thief before the map is stolen. If challenged, the thief flees into the night and cannot be found. If the map is stolen, the TN for all Explore tests made to find the King's Chair increases by one level (see page 62).

Neekerbreekers (All Companions – Weariness)
The swarming insects of the marshes fall upon the company, stopping them from resting.

All companions must pass a **Travel** test, or be made temporarily Weary for the rest of the journey.

Finding the King's Chair

At the end of the journey, the company come to the region around the 'King's Chair'. The swamp here is a particular

ugly mire of mud, thorny bushes, low-lying islands amid the slime, and pestilent clouds of tiny, tiny insects that swarm into the player-heroes' mouths and noses. It's a vile, doleful place.

Finding the King's Chair requires a successful Explore test. If this test fails, the character gains 2 Fatigue from slogging around in the mud. If all the companions fail the roll, they can try again the following day. Eventually, the explorers find a few jagged fingers of worked stone rising from the mud. There, a cracked and weathered marble floor can be found, half-sunk in the swamp. Here, the remains of a fallen wall. This was once a town, perhaps, or a great palace in some past age.

At twilight, the company finally come upon the King's Chair. In the gloaming, it seems as though a figure sits on the broken seat, but as the company come closer, they discover it is not a man – it is a huge nest of stinging insects! Disturbed, the insects swarm into the evening sky, and for an instant the companions have the disconcerting impression that the insect-swarm takes on the shape of a huge man-like figure, crowned with the dying sun. As the swarm flits away, the silence of the marsh is suddenly filled with the neek-breek sound of other insects.

Finding the Black Barrow

To find the Black Barrow, the company have two options.

- A successful **Search** test (TN16) locates the barrow. If this test fails, the character gains 2 Fatigue and may search again.

- With a great or extraordinary success, the searcher finds the barrow, but also comes across some bones and other remains in the bog. Two bodies lie here, although all that can be said of them is that one was once a man, and the other set are the bones of a Dwarf. These were the members of Gorlanc's company; Egri, murdered by Grón, and Grón, murdered by Timeas, many years ago.

- If a character sits in the King's Chair, they find that one particular mound in the distance somehow seems more significant than all the rest. The character has the strong intuition that their father lies buried in that mound. A terrible feeling of sorrow and loss floods the hero's soul (and forces a Corruption test to avoid gaining 2 Shadow points).

The Black Barrow is a steep-sided mound lined with stones. Climbing up, the characters discover a large flat stone that's clearly been moved several times in the past, judging by the scratch marks on its underside.

Pushing the stone aside lets out a waft of foul air that makes the companions' torches flicker blue and green, followed by another swarm of flies. The way into the Barrow lies open...

- Part Eight - Though Dead He Be, It Belongs To Me!

The Black Barrow consists of at least two chambers, upper and lower. The entrance from above leads into the upper chamber. The drop from the entrance hole to the floor of the upper chamber is some ten or twelve feet, so getting down requires a rope or some acrobatics. Ask the players if the entire company are descending into the barrow – the question as to who's in the barrow and who's still up top will shortly become very relevant.

The Upper Barrow

Climbing down, the characters find that the upper chamber is lined with four stone coffins, each containing the remains of some lordling of the North from ages past. There are several small jars and chests that once held treasures, but these have mostly been looted by Timeas over the years. Some coins remain, worth 30 Treasure.

The company also find two bundles of moth-eaten personal effects – travelling gear, some Dwarf-made tools for tomb-robbing including a crowbar and a portable block-and-tackle, weapons and a few other trinkets. These belonged to Egri and Grón, two of Timeas' former companions.

The only thing of note among these items is a partially legible letter that seems like it might once have been instructions on finding the barrow; the words 'Barrow', 'Weathertop' and 'unearth' can be made out, as can the name 'Gorlanc' and the seal of a black bird.

The Lower Barrow

Another trapdoor leads down into the lower barrow. Slimy moss grows around this stone, and should the company lever it up, they see why – the lower barrow is flooded. They can make out vague shapes through the murky water – are those swords? Is that another, grander, tomb? Could that shine there be gold, lost beneath the mud and cold water of the rising marshes?

Retrieving anything from the lower barrow requires an **Athletics** test. On a success, the diver grabs a random item from the **Lower Barrow Treasure Table**. On a great success, two; on an extraordinary success, three. On a failure, the character must choose between returning empty-handed, or finding one item and losing 5 Endurance.

With the exception of and ᚠ results, mark items off the table as they are found. Rolling a result a second time means the character comes up empty-handed.

If you're using the Magical Treasure rules from the *Rivendell* supplement, then this roll doubles as a Magical Treasure roll (see *Rivendell*, page 86). Re-roll subsequent or ᚠ results if the same character dives twice.

Lower Barrow Treasure Table:

Roll	Treasure Found
	A spectral hand grabs the treasure-seeker, pulling its victim down into the abyss. The unfortunate character must make a Valour test to break free. Failing the test causes the drowning character to lose 5 Endurance. If the character breaks free, they grab something from the shade – a Magical Treasure of some sort, like a ring or talisman (see *Rivendell*, page 86).
1	1-6 Treasure (roll 1 success die)
2	2-12 Treasure (roll 2 success dice)
3	3-36 Treasure (roll 3 success dice)
4	A small gold ring, worth 5 Treasure.
5	A casket of coins holding 25 Treasure (counts as two items for the purposes of recovery).
6	A ring of silver, studded with a fine emerald, worth 10 Treasure.
7	A jeweled sword-hilt, worth 20 Treasure.
8	Pearls of great worth, worth 20 Treasure.
9	A lordly chain of gold, bearing the emblem of Arthedain, worth 20 Treasure.
10	A golden crown, bearing seven shining sapphires, worth 50 Treasure.
ᚠ	A Magical Treasure of some sort – see *Rivendell*, page 86.

The total value of the hoard is some 150* Treasure, if the companions take the time to properly empty the barrow.

Gror's Treachery

Grór the Dwarf came to Bree looking for old Timeas' map. He was responsible, to a degree, for Timeas' unexpected death. When he realised that the player-heroes were already on the trail of the map, he conceived a plan to let them brave the Troll-den and the other dangers; he would follow them all the while, and then murder them as Timeas murdered his brother Grón.

He arrives at the barrow accompanied by a number of brigands and hired brutes from Bree. Depending on how

your adventure unfolded, he might also be accompanied by one of the Heathertons.

- If the company maligned or insulted Tomas, then Tomas fell in with Grór and told him everything.

- If Tomas is with the company, then Grór is accompanied by Nick Heatherton, Tom's father. Grór fooled the older man by pretending to be concerned for Tom's safety, and Nick told Grór enough about his brother's travels for the Dwarf to guess the location of the Black Barrow.

If one or more of the companions are outside the barrow, then call for **Awareness** tests. If successful, they spot Grór and his allies approaching in time to shout a warning to those below. If the company are taken unawares, then they're in a sticky situation – Grór's plan is to quickly defeat any characters outside the Barrow, and then close the entrance, leaving those inside to starve. A few days without food or water or light should be enough to soften up the hardiest adventurer.

If he gets the opportunity for a villainous speech, Grór says: *"my master sent me to fetch the map, but I've found a far richer prize. Timeas murdered my brother Grón on this very hill, and if there was any justice, 'twould be his bones that lie below and not my brothers'. Still, he shall not sleep alone."*

If he's accompanied by one of the Heathertons, then at this point he spins around, stabs his companion, and kicks the Heatherton into the barrow. A successful roll of Healing can save the life of the wounded man, but it takes several rounds to staunch the flow of blood. If Tom's the one pushed into the barrow, then he breaks his leg in the fall and is forever lame. To the companions, he says *"I have little quarrel with ye. Hand over your weapons and any of my treasure that you've stolen, and I might let you live."*

Entombed!

If the company do get buried alive in the Black Barrow, they're in trouble! Each member of the company must make a Corruption test each day to avoid gaining 2 points of Shadow. Once the food runs out, everyone becomes Weary, too.

There are ways to escape, however. The company could try digging their way out of the barrow; doing so is a prolonged action requiring a total of 10 successes on Craft tests. Each player may make one test each day. The TN is 18 without tools, 16 with improvised tools such as mattocks, or 14 if the company were clever enough to bring spades. Failing a test with an means a cave-in.

They could try parleying with the Dwarf. As Grór said, if they surrender everything, he might let them live. It's unlikely that the players will be willing to humble themselves so, but it is a way out – and they can always return in future for revenge on Grór. Alternatively, clever player-heroes could lure Grór down into the barrow by playing on the notorious Dwarven love of treasure; by describing the treasure of the lower barrow with Awe or Song, they could overcome his resolve and convince him that if he doesn't claim the treasure right now, the adventurers will hide it or somehow make off with it. Alternatively, they could trick Grór by pretending to surrender.

Another option might be to swim into the murk of the lower barrow. The water got in somehow – maybe the adventurers could escape the same way. There is, indeed, a crack in the foundations through which the mire leaked in, and a Hobbit or other *Small* character could squeeze through the water and mud with an Athletics test (TN 16); failing the test means the character suffers a Wound while escaping.

The Battle of the Black Barrow

Grór's brought one brute for every companion. So, if you have five player-heroes, they face five brutes plus Grór himself.

Notable concerns:

- **Climbing out of the Barrow:** If there is a rope, or someone helping a character climb up, it is easy to climb out of the barrow, and does not require a test. If there is no rope and no help, then climbing out requires an Athletics test. Attempting a climb is the only thing that the player-hero can do in that round of combat, and only one character can enter or exit the barrow at a time.
- **Jumping or Falling into the Barrow:** Falling into the barrow costs 6 Endurance, and the character must make a Protection test to avoid taking a Wound. A successful Athletics test halves the damage.
- **The Shades of Men:** If you need to give the player-heroes an edge, remember this is a barrow of the North-Kingdom, and within sight of a spot associated with the kings of old. It would not be unfitting for the earth to suddenly shift beneath Grór's feet, or some of his brutes quailing as the mists close in and they suddenly fear the presence of ghosts.

Brutes of Bree:

Attribute Level	
2	
Endurance	Hate
8	1
Parry	Armour
3	1d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Spear	2
Special Abilities	
Craven	-

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Spear	5	9	14	Pierce

Grór the Dwarf:

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hate
25	4
Parry	Armour
5	3d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 4	Custom, 3
Perception, 2	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Mattock	3

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Mattock	8	10	18	Break shield

- Epilogue -
Of Earth and Water, Blood and Bone

How many bodies now lie in the tomb of the Black Barrow? Have the company saved the Heathertons from the sins of Uncle Tim, or is sorrow compounded on sorrow?

Neither Tom nor Nick have any desire for a share of the treasure from the Black Barrow, so the companions may claim it all if they have the stomach for it (unless, of course, they owe the Old Troll some money...).

If Tom survives, he returns chastened to Bree, and puts aside any thoughts of treasure or adventure.

And if the Old Troll survives, he returns to his Troll-hole all alone, gnawing on old bones.

Tom's leg is game, since home he came,
And his bootless foot is lasting lame;
But Troll don't care, and he's still there
With the bone he boned from its owner.

- Strange Men, - Strange Roads

- **When:** This quest could be set in the late spring or early summer of any year, but is designed to be run after the events of *Old Bones and Skins*.
- **Where:** The adventure is mostly set on the Road west of the Forsaken Inn, travelling to both the Chetwood and Bree.
- **What:** A Ranger of the North has been murdered. The companions must stalk a band of travellers to identify the killers hiding amongst them.
- **Why:** The company is assumed to be allied with the Rangers of the North, or at least friendly enough with the Rangers that they would investigate the murder of one. If the company isn't known to the Rangers, Haleth (see page 55) may be a useful way to introduce them or may ask them to investigate directly.
- **Who:** Two of the travellers are followers of Gorlanc (see page 69) travelling into the west. The key figure is Berelas, a healer from Mirkwood who secretly carries a magical treasure bound for Gorlanc.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into eight parts, which begin at the Forsaken Inn and end in Bree.

Part One - At the Forsaken Inn

The company travel to the Forsaken Inn, a day's ride east of Bree, to meet with a Ranger. When their contact fails to arrive, they must discover what happened to him.

Part Two - The Body in the Well

Their investigations reveal that the Ranger was murdered and thrown down a well. Circumstantial evidence points to the identity of his killers.

Part Three - The Traders' Caravan

The company spy upon the group of travellers and traders who just departed the Forsaken Inn, including the murderers.

Part Four - The Strangers in the Woods

The company encounter Elves in the Chetwood, and learn something of the stakes.

Part Five - Not to Strike Without Need

Beregal turns aside from her errand to heal a sick family.

Part Six - Knives in Bree

When the travellers stop in Bree, another crime is committed in the night.

Part Seven - Before the Reeve

Having identified (or, at the very least, believing they have identified) the Ranger's killer, the companions must meet with the Reeve of Bree.

Part Eight - The Choices of Mistress Beregal

Guided by the wisdom of the player-heroes, Beregal chooses her fate.

Epilogue - The Assault on Gorlanc's Fort

The sorcerer Gorlanc has not reckoned on the might of Rivendell. The companions either hear about, or witness for themselves, the destruction of Gorlanc's fortress by the Elves.

- Part One - At The Forsaken Inn

The company have come to the Forsaken Inn (see page 19) to meet a contact of theirs, the Ranger Mallor, called Tarry-Mack by the folk of Bree. The reasons for this meeting are left up to the Loremaster, and should be introduced in a prior Adventuring or Fellowship phase.

Mallor might have promised to bring news from the West or South to the company, or have agreed to join the player-heroes on an Orc-hunt or some other errand. Characters who know Haleth (see page 55) might be sent to meet Mallor on her behalf.

If the company are primarily Bree-landers or wandering adventurers from Wilderland, then they might have been sent to meet Mallor by a patron like Gandalf, Elrond or Beorn – Tarry-Mack has travelled east of the mountains in his time.

Even if the company have never met Tarry-Mack, they will know his reputation: he is argumentative, uncommonly ugly and has very few friends, but is loyal and stalwart to those he likes. He travels alone, walking from shore to mountains and back again.

Whatever the reason for their meeting, the company has come to the Forsaken Inn on a warm summer's evening.

Strangers at the Inn

Even the rosy last light of a warm summer's day cannot make the Forsaken Inn look welcoming. The tumbledown building looks like the corpse of an inn, and it's only the ponies and carts outside that suggest the inn is still in business.

Inside, the small common room is crowded with members of a trading caravan that's heading West (these traders are discussed in detail in **Part Three**). The company see several Dwarves, and a few grim-looking dangerous Men. They can try talking to the travellers with **Riddle**, but any conversations are cut short by the Caravan-master, Edoric.

"I want to make Bree-land by tomorrow night. I've a crick in my neck from sleeping rough, and I ain't going to get much rest in this festering pit. To bed, sluggards! We march before the break of dawn."

Grumbling, the Men of the caravan finish their drinks and head to the communal sleeping-room at the back of the inn. The Dwarves ignore Edoric and continue drinking and talking amongst themselves in low whispers. It doesn't take **Insight** to see that the traders don't care much for one another.

Should anyone try to eavesdrop on the Dwarves, they switch to their own strange tongue, or stop talking altogether.

The Size of the Caravan

The nine key members of the caravan are described in Part Three – The Traders' Caravan. You can add more guards and travellers to the caravan as needed; for this adventure to work, there need to be enough travellers in the group that the player-heroes cannot challenge the caravan openly and interrogate them to find out what happened to Mallor the Ranger.

If you only have three or four player-heroes, then Edoric's company of eight should be big enough to dissuade all but the most foolhardy from trying a direct approach. On the other hand, if you're lucky enough to have six or seven players, then add a few more guards to make battling the caravan less appealing.

The Innkeeper

The current owner of the Forsaken Inn – or, at least, the only one willing to lay claim to the place – is Jack. He's the owner, bartender, brewer, cook and clerk too, although he only does one of those jobs with any degree of enthusiasm. Eventually, he returns to the common room and acknowledges the company's presence. *"We're full tonight,"* he says with a grin. *"I can squeeze you in, but it'll cost double."*

(If anyone points out that it's a warm summer's night and they can just sleep outside, then Jack happily describes, in loving and gleeful detail, all the bugs that swarm out of the nearby Midgewater Marshes on nights like this, and exactly what sorts of bites and boils they inflict on tasty travellers.)

When asked about the Ranger, Jack shrugs. *"Tarry-Mack? He was in early, with a face on him that'd sour beer. Sit yourself down there and order a drink; he'll be back soon, no doubt."*

Mallor's Pack

A successful roll of **Awareness** (or a Trait like *Curious, Keen-eyed* or *Suspicious*) spots a weathered backpack

and bedroll stashed behind the bar; a Ranger's gear. If challenged, Jack admits the pack belongs to Tarry-Mack; the Ranger left it behind when he left earlier in the evening.) See **The Pack**, page 71.

The Missing Ranger

The night draws in. The fire in the grate dwindles. The Dwarves rise and retire to bed. Soon, Jack's snoring by the embers (sleeping, as he always does, with a naked short-sword across his legs, in case anyone tries to rob him in the night). Still, there is no sign of Mallor. If roused (carefully), Jack snorts at the idea of worrying about a Ranger. *"They're like stray dogs; you don't see 'em for days, and then they come snuffling at your door demanding food. He'll show up. He always does."*

Questioning the traders is equally fruitless at this point. Edoric has no love for Rangers, thinking them nothing more than thieves and troublemakers, and has a special dislike of Tarry-Mack. *"He was snooping around earlier, no doubt planning to rob me or mine. Now, be off with you!"*

If the player-heroes try searching for Mallor in the darkness, it's challenging (a **Search** test a TN 18).

A successful roll finds a broken knife thrown in an outbuilding at the back of the inn; the hilt is marked with an M-rune, suggesting it is Mallor's blade. The blade is unnaturally cold, icy even, to the touch. A great success finds some spilled blood nearby; an extraordinary success finds the body in the well (see **Part Two – The Body in the Well**).

If the companions fail, then they must wait until daybreak to conduct a more thorough search.

Departure of the Trading Caravan

As Edoric promised, the caravan departs before dawn, leaving in the ghostly grey light that presages the rising of the sun. In the gloom, the company look like ghosts assembling for some dread purpose, and it is oddly hard to get a count of their number.

The trading caravan sets off West, heading for Bree. The Forsaken Inn is a day's ride away from Bree, but the caravan sets a much slower pace; they'll be lucky to reach Bree in three or four days.

Searching By Daylight

With the help of the sun, searching for signs of Mallor is much easier. The company can find the spilled blood at the back of the inn automatically. Bloodshed implies a sinister reason behind Mallor's absence, and prompts a further search.

Another Shadow of the Past

The events of the previous evening were set in motion long, long ago.

Many years previously, a scholar of ill-repute named Gorlanc led a company of treasure-hunters and thieves. He defiled the tombs of the Dúnedain, and was driven out of the North by the Rangers (see page 47 for the first part of this tale). Now, Gorlanc has returned to the North after many years' devilry and knavery in the South. Mallor was one of the Rangers who fought against Gorlanc, and remembers well his battle against the scholar's servants. Two of the members of the caravan, the mountebank Eirlinon and the healer Berelas, are servants of Gorlanc, and they carry with them a treasure that belongs to the scholar – a Ring of Power, recovered from a ruined vault in Eregion.

Some foresight or intuition caused Mallor to spy on Berelas. When the members of the trading caravan were eating in the inn last evening, he crept into their sleeping quarters and searched her baggage. There, he found an amulet bearing the symbol of Gorlanc. Suspecting Berelas of being in league with the scholar, he tried to follow her when she slipped out to meet with Eirlinon, but he was discovered by a Shade sent by Gorlanc. The Shade wounded him, and Eirlinon cut his throat and threw Mallor down the well while the Ranger was stunned. Now, Eirlinon and Berelas are once more safe and concealed within the traders' caravan, and each step down the Road brings them closer to Gorlanc.

Gorlanc himself has occupied a ruined fort south of Fornost, where he is gathering all sorts of Evil Men to his banner.

- Part Two -
The Body in the Well

Searching around brings the companions to an old well near the Road.

Mallor's body floats face down in the dark waters below. The body would have been completely invisible by night; it's only visible as a black shape against blacker water by day. Recovering the Ranger's corpse requires a companion to climb down the narrow, slime-slick shaft and tie a rope around Mallor's waist.

The body is weirdly, impossibly cold to the touch. His right hand is so frozen that it's covered in a layer of ice. His throat has also been cut, but the wound is relatively clean and free from gore; it is as though his blood was so cold and thick that it oozed out instead of spurting from a mortal wound. His face bears an expression of pure horror, and his eyes are both frozen and covered in ice.

His coin-purse and some other belongings are still with him. His sword and travelling pack are missing (the pack Tarry-mack lacks is back at the inn; his sword sank down into the mud at the bottom of the well and is lost).

A character with *Shadow-lore* or a similar Trait, or a Ranger of the North with the *See the Unseen* Virtue, can guess that something supernatural was involved in Mallor's death. Icy cold and death-by-terror are horrors associated with wraiths – but what undead monster would pause to slit a victim's throat, and why would a wraith hide the body?

Other Clues

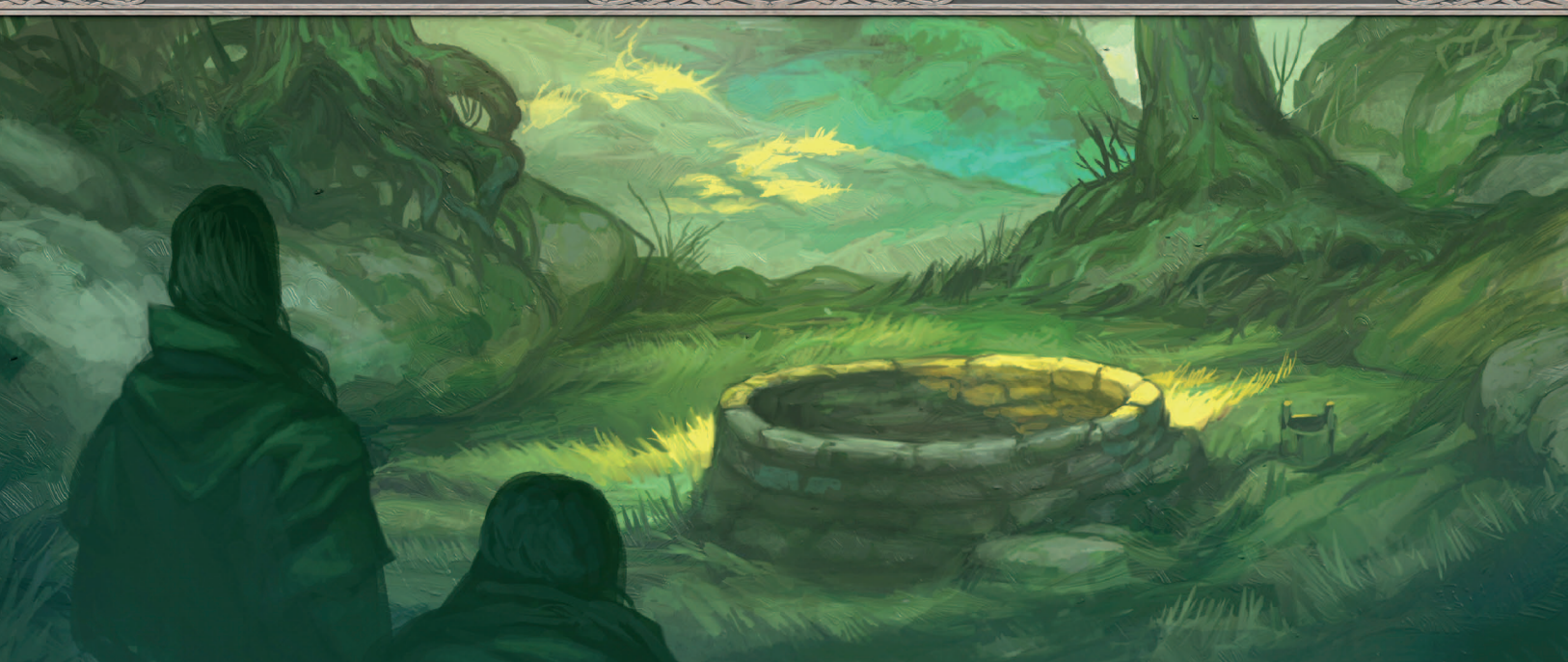
A successful roll of **Search** (this time at TN 14) finds the still-icy dagger in the outbuilding; a great or extraordinary success finds footprints and scuff marks that let the company recreate Mallor's last movements.

It appears that the Ranger was hiding by the wall, as if eavesdropping on someone, when he spun around abruptly as if surprised. Someone then dragged his unconscious or dead form and threw him down the old well.

Questioning the Innkeeper

A successful **Awe** or **Persuade** test made when questioning Jack the Innkeeper reveals the following information about Tarry-Mack and the events of the previous day:

- Tarry-Mack turned up around noon. He was the only customer at the inn for a few hours. He always annoyed Jack: the Ranger had this talent for breathing in a way that would turn the gentlest Hobbit into a remorseless killer. Whenever Jack did anything in the



inn, Tarry-Mack would snort as if to say *"you're going to mess that up, you idiot, and I'm going to sit here and drink your beer and watch you suffer"*.

- When Edoric's caravan showed up, Tarry-Mack made himself scarce. He did the Ranger thing of hiding in a corner, smoking and listening to everyone. Jack had the impression that Tarry-Mack was expecting the caravan, but the travellers didn't seem to know him and didn't talk much to him (not that Jack can blame them – who'd want to talk to that Ranger).

- At one point, when the newcomers were eating, Tarry-Mack left the common room. He returned a few minutes' later.

- One of the Dwarves in the travelling company demanded to know where Tarry-Mack had gone, and all but accused the Ranger of stealing from the caravan. Edoric talked the Dwarf down, and then threatened Tarry-Mack, telling the Ranger to beat it and begone. Jack doesn't recall which Dwarf it was.
- Later on, Tarry-Mack went out again, and that's the last Jack saw of him until the companions brought word of the Ranger's death.

- He doesn't know what happened to Tarry-Mack; maybe the Ranger got into a fight with Edoric or a Dwarf. Jack won't shed any tears for Tarry-Mack.

If the companions fail the test, then Jack claims to remember nothing of use. The inn was very busy last night, after all.

A great or extraordinary success, or generosity on the part of the player-heroes, prompts Jack to remember that Tarry-Mack left his pack behind the bar. Alternatively, a roll of **Insight** or **Awareness** lets the players discover the pack for themselves (Jack intends to loot the pack and sell the dead man's belongings once the company are gone).

The Pack

Mallor's pack contains well-made travelling gear, as one would expect of a Ranger. Down at the bottom, underneath blankets and other supplies, is a flask of silver containing a tonic made in Rivendell; drinking from it restores a number of Endurance points equal to the drinker's Favoured Heart score plus the roll of a Success die. There's a single draught left in the flask.

There's also a little bundle of cloth, and wrapped in that bundle is a small amulet made of greenish glass, held on a golden chain. There's a strange symbol on the amulet.

- A character with *Lore of Arnor, Shadow-lore* or *Old Lore*, or who might plausibly know about Gorlanc, recognises the symbol as Gorlanc's rune.

- Jack can guess that the amulet doesn't belong to the Ranger, and crows that Tarry-Mack has finally been exposed as a robber. He only wishes the Ranger was still alive so he could rub it in his face.

Finding the Murderer

It's clear that Mallor's death is somehow connected to the traders' caravan. However, the player-heroes aren't likely to possess the authority to question the members of the caravan, and based on Edoric's behaviour last night, it's obvious to them that if they accused a member of the caravan without solid proof, Edoric would turn on them and they'd have to fight all the travellers. The best option is to follow the caravan, eavesdrop on it, and try to find out more.

The Ring of Seven Jewels

This Ring of Power was forged by the folk of the Whispering Halls (see *Rivendell*, page 35) in the middle days of the Second Age. It was one of their last essays in Ring-lore, before they turned their hands towards the forging of the Great Rings, and as such it is extremely powerful.

Unfortunately, the ring was tainted in the destruction of Eregion, for the Elf-lord who wore it last was captured and tortured by the Enemy, and her suffering stained the Seven Jewels. Now, while the Ring greatly enhances the spirit and might of anyone who wears it, it twists the wearer's soul towards darkness.

The Ring increases the wearer's basic Attributes by +3, +2 and +1, allocated as the wearer chooses among Body, Mind and Heart. The ring also has a most peculiar Greater Blessing, affecting the Common Skill the wearer most desires to use when appealing to its powers. But the Ring is doubly cursed, increasing the wearer's Shadow total by 5 points (*Shadow Taint*) and attracting the attention of the Enemy (*Hunted*). (For details about the effects of Blessings and the Ring's Curses, see *Rivendell*, pages 93 and 102, respectively.)

- Part Three -
The Traders' Caravan

"I have quick ears", he went on, lowering his voice, "and though I cannot disappear, I have hunted many wild and wary things and I can usually avoid being seen, if I wish. Now, I was behind the hedge this evening on the Road west of Bree, when four Hobbits came out of the Downlands..."

The caravan left the Forsaken Inn ahead of the player-heroes, but it's easy to catch up with it, especially when the heavy carts get stuck in the mud. It's summer and the player-heroes are on or near the Road, so there's no need for them to make Fatigue tests.

Spying & Eavesdropping

The safest approach, assuming the player-heroes are relatively stealthy, is to hide in the hedgerows and small copses along the Road and eavesdrop on the caravan as it travels. Close observation and keen ears give clues as to who plotted against Tarry-Mack.

It takes the caravan four days to get to Bree. Each day, any of the companions may try their hand at spying. Doing so requires a **Stealth** test; it's TN 12 on the first day, TN 10 on days two and three as the Road passes the eaves of the Chetwood, and TN 12 again on the last day as the caravan draws near Bree.

- Before they spy on the caravan, give the players the **surface details** of all the members of the caravan, so they can pick their targets.

- On a normal success, the companion may watch *one* of the people in the caravan. Watching a target means the companion gets the **first impressions** and **close associates** of that target.

- On a great success, the companion may watch an additional person or reduce the TN of another player-hero's **Stealth** test by 4. On an extraordinary success, do both.

- If the **Stealth** test fails, the companion can't get close enough to the caravan to glean any useful information. It's only if the companion fails with an that the caravan guards spot the intruder and give chase. This may lead to **Confronting the Caravan** (on page 81) if the intruder cannot escape.

Companions who don't attempt a **Stealth** test are assumed to be shadowing the caravan from a safe distance; they don't get to observe anyone, but can speculate about motives and offer suggestions to the spies.

Digging Deeper

Each of the key characters in the caravan has a **digging deeper** entry, and some have a **secret**. Once the players

Observation & Investigation

Much of this part of the adventure assumes that the player-heroes are stealthily gathering information and observing the suspects. Therefore, several scenes may simply play out with the companions lurking and not getting involved.

Don't just passively read the text out to the players; make gathering that information interesting and challenging. Call for Stealth, Awareness and Insight tests when needed. Give them only fragments of a scene, and force them to sneak closer to learn more. Listen to their speculation about what's going on, and drop clues to disrupt their theories. If they settle on Eirlinon early on as the prime suspect, then have Eoin talk about how he's secretly in love with Mistress Berelas and he'd do anything to be with her, and let them wonder if the poor boy was the perpetrator of a crime of passion.

If the players do reveal their presence, then their interactions with the various Loremaster characters should primarily reveal information instead of altering the plot prematurely. If they suggest that Narvi and Narvig should come adventuring to earn money, then Narvi could hint that they've got an easier method of getting rich and repaying their father's debts. If the characters start prodding Berelas' conscience, then have Eirlinon threaten her to keep her in line.

Alarums & Interruptions

If Berelas suspects she's in danger, then she calls upon the Cold Shade (see page 82) to harry any eavesdroppers. An encounter with the Cold Shade is a good way to lead in to Part Four – Strangers on in the Woods. Optionally, you can run Wild Beasts (see page 83) to break up the journey, especially if it seems that the players are determined to force a confrontation with Edoric before the caravan reaches Bree.

Other Approaches

The players might try other methods of investigation, like infiltrating the caravan (*"Hail! I am an Elf of Rivendell, one of the High Elves of the West, who crossed the Sea in the First Age of the World to make war on the Enemy and take back the Silmarils from the Iron Crown. Also I am a simple caravan-guard looking for work..."*) or secretly questioning members of the caravan if they wander away from the Road. As long as the player-heroes don't commit any deeds that would incur Shadow gain, any approach to investigation should work. Be flexible – this adventure describes the likeliest path taken by the players, but your group may find their own path. You may need to skip onto Part Seven – Mistress Berelas' Choice early, or improvise your own events based on the plans of the various Loremaster characters and the actions of your players.

have decided which members of the caravan to investigate, they can try digging deeper. This may require more eavesdropping, or sneaking into the caravan camp at night to steal items or ask questions.

The Caravan

The caravan consists of nine (or more!) travellers, two heavy, horse-drawn carts, and ten ponies laden with baggage. It's split roughly between Men and Dwarves. For each member of the caravan, the description includes:

Background: The first section provides a brief description of the character for the Loremaster.

Game Rules: Some travellers include skills and Attributes, and if it's likely the players might fight that character, there's a full set of combat statistics.

Surface Details: What an observer sees immediately, without needing to spy.

First Impressions: What the observer learns after a day of spying and eavesdropping.

Close Associates: Who the target associates with on the journey.

Digging Deeper: What the player-heroes need to do to learn more.

Secrets: The dark secret concealed by the caravan member.

Edoric, the Guide

Edoric is from Enedwaith, kin to the Dunlendings, who dwell far to the south of Eriador along the coast, near where the Greyflood empties into the sea. Edoric is not the name he was given by his mother, but the name he uses when travelling North and West.

His is a restless soul; he has not seen the land of his birth in twenty years, and he knows he shall die on the Road. He is an experienced caravan guide; he has led traders from the Blue Mountains to the Great Ford, but he has never gone east of the Anduin.

He's fiercely protective of those in his care; all he has in his life is his professional reputation.

Edoric:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
18	4
Parry	Armour
4+2 (shield)	2d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 4
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Spear	4
Bow	2
Special Abilities	
Commanding Voice	Defend Ally
Hideous Toughness	-

Defend Ally: By spending a point of Hate, Edoric can redirect an attack aimed at an ally of his to him, much like the *Protect Companions* special task.

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Spear	5	9	14	Pierce
Bow	5	10	14	Pierce

Surface Details

A big man with weathered skin and a well-worn cloak, leaning heavily on his spear. He walks with a rangy pace, eating up the miles.

First Impressions

Edoric seems to be in charge; he's the one barking orders, getting the animals moving, tending to everything. He seems constantly impatient.

Close Associates

Berelas, Eoin, Narvig, Mirabar.

Digging Deeper
With a successful **Insight** test, it's clear that Edoric isn't in charge; he's employed as a guide as far as Bree. If the characters wait until Bree before intervening, or if they can prove that one of Edoric's employers acted treacherously at the Forsaken Inn, then they might be able to avoid facing the big man in battle.

Secrets
None. He's an honest man.

Eoin, the Bree-lander
Eoin is a young man of Bree. This is his first journey outside Bree-land; he travelled from Bree as far as the High Pass, and now believes he has seen all the world. He's a simple, honest fellow, hired by Edoric because he has a strong back and follows orders.

Attribute Level:	2
Specialities:	Cooking, Trading
Distinctive Features:	Eager, Trusty
Relevant Skills:	Travel ♦♦, Riddle ♦♦

Surface Details
Fresh-faced, wide-eyed.

First Impressions
A young man of no more than fifteen summers, all of them gentle. He seems to be the caravan's scout and errand boy. He knows these roads well – he must be from the Bree-land.

Close Associates
Edoric, Berelas.

Digging Deeper
If a companion eavesdrops on him in the woods, they'll discover that, alone, Eoin talks to himself. He believes himself to be in love with Berelas (he only met her a few weeks ago, but to him she's sophisticated and exotic, an enchantress from across the mountains) and declares passionately that he would die to defend her. He's less fond of her 'brother' Hirlinon.

Secrets
If questioned with Awe or Inspire, then Eoin admits that he saw Berelas and Hirlinon leaving the common-room of the Forsaken Inn together after the meal, and that they went out "looking for healing herbs". That was around the time that the Ranger was murdered.

Vig, brother of Vogar
Old Vig is the eldest of the four Dwarves in the caravan, and their leader. He is a smith, and if he once dreamed of forging swords and shields for some King under the Mountain, he has long since put those dreams aside. He is a tinker, fixing pots and pans.

Attribute Level:	3
Specialities:	Smith-Craft, Stone-Craft
Distinctive Features:	Cautious, Wary
Relevant Skills:	Craft ♦♦♦♦

Surface Details
An old white-bearded Dwarf, carrying the tools of a smith.

First Impressions
Vig is very protective of his brother Vogar. He speaks for him, watches over him as they travel, and is always by his side.

Close Associates
Vogar, Narvig, Narvi.

Digging Deeper
If a companion eavesdrops by night), they hear Vig in conversation with Berelas. She says that there are healing salves and herbs that can cure almost any injury, but such treatments are not cheap. Vig tears at his beard and confesses that he has no money to spare. He casts a venomous glare at Mirabar as he says this.

Secrets
Vig is deeply indebted to Mirabar, and owes him a fortune. He ran into debt when his brother Vogar was wounded by an Orc, and Vig had to stop working in the forge to care for him. The forge burnt down, and Vig had to borrow money from Mirabar to survive. Now, he is a homeless wandering tinker-smith, trying to scrape together enough coin to repay the money-lender.

In game terms, Vig owes around 50 Treasure to Mirabar.

Vogar, brother of Vig
Vogar was once a Dwarf-warrior of some renown, a champion of the Blue Mountains. Indeed, he was among those who volunteered to accompany Thorin Oakenshield on the Quest of Erebor. Tragedy struck before Vogar could depart; he met a band of Orcs in the Wild, and one of them struck him a blow so terrible that it sundered both Vogar's helm and the skull beneath. He survived, but his wits were addled by the injury, and now he suffers from both agonising headaches and blinding fits of rage.

Vogar:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
22	2/6
Parry	Armour
3	4d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 1
Movement, 2	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Mattock	3
Special Abilities	
Berserk Rage	Horrible Strength
No Quarter	-

Berserk Rage: If provoked, or if anyone rolls an in the combat, then Vogar flies into a berserk rage. His Hate rating increases to 6, and he may continue to fight even if Wounded or reduced to 0 Endurance as long as he spends a point of Hate each round. He will keep fighting until he runs out of Hate.

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Mattock	8	10	18	Break Shield

Surface Details
A burly Dwarf with a hideously scarred face.

First Impressions
He may be simple-minded; he slurs when he speaks, and often just stares at the ground instead of walking. If

his brother were not there to take care of him, he might wander off the Road and perish in the Wild.

Close Associates
Vig.

Digging Deeper
A successful roll of Healing reveals that Vogar suffered a terrible wound in battle that makes it hard for him to think clearly. He cannot remember what happened at the Forsaken Inn; eavesdropping characters hear him asking his nephews in low tones about that evening.

Secrets
At night, Vogar mutters and moans about murdering Mirabar. His brother always sleeps close by, and rouses instantly if Vogar tries to rise from his bedroll.

Narvig, son of Vig
The elder son of Vig, Narvig feels his father's shame very keenly. He would do anything to relieve Vig's suffering and restore his pride.

Surface Details
Young, tall for a Dwarf.

First Impressions
Narvig is clearly the liaison between the Dwarves and the other travellers. He's the only one who speaks to Edoric or Eoin.

Close Associates
Vig, Narvi, Edoric.

Digging Deeper
A companion who sneaks into the camp discovers that Narvig and Narvi connive privately by night. If the companion eavesdrops on them, they will hear the pair plotting to steal gold from Berelas.

Secrets
Narvig intends to give the stolen gold to Mirabar, freeing his father Vig from the debt he owes.

Narvi the Young
The youngest of the Dwarves, Narvi is something of a scoundrel. He dreams of going to Erebor and becoming as wealthy as the kings of old, and is frustrated by his father's debts and his uncle's illness. Narvi always wants the quick fix, the easy answer.

Surface Details
Young, light on his feet.

First Impressions
The merriest, least dour Dwarf you ever laid eyes on.

Close Associates
Narvig, Hirlinon.

Digging Deeper
A successful Insight test will reveal that Narvi is trying to befriend Hirlinon. The Dwarf has a seemingly inexhaustible flask of some Dwarven spirits, and gets the mountebank tipsy each evening. Also, Narvi is remarkably stealthy for a Dwarf; he can step as lightly as a cat when he wants to.

Secrets
Narvi's the mastermind of the 'plan' to steal from Berelas. He's getting Hirlinon drunk every night so the mountebank won't be able to wake up when they attempt to steal the Ring of Seven Jewels from Berelas.

Narvig or Narvi:

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
18	3
Parry	Armour
4+2 (shield)	3d+1
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Sword	3

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Sword	5	10	16	Disarm

Hirlinon of Gondor, follower of Gorlanc
Hirlinon comes from the land of Gondor, far to the South. He is one of Gorlanc's followers, a secret worshipper of the Enemy. He has seen the power of Mordor; he knows the gathering strength of the Enemy, and he knows that the Free Peoples cannot hope to stand against it. He has succumbed to despair, and come out the other side filled with malice and secret loathing for the common folk. He now delights in tricking people out of their money and causing suffering, because what else is there to do? The Enemy will soon rule all of Middle-earth, so why should Hirlinon not have some merriment at the expense of others before the day is done?

Surface Details
Bright clothes, ready smile. The soft hands of a scholar.

First Impressions
He seems to be something of a mountebank or carnival-barker. His pony is laden down with boxes of medicines, cure-alls, potions, fireworks and other wonders. Hirlinon claims to be Berelas' brother, but the two look nothing alike.

Close Associates
Berelas, Edoric, Narvi.

Digging Deeper
A companion who sneaks into the camp can find an amulet identical to the one found on Mallor's body amongst Hirlinon's belongings (see page 71). Hirlinon keeps a very close watch on Berelas, following her like a shadow.

Secrets
Like Berelas, Hirlinon is a follower of Gorlanc. He's much more devoted to Gorlanc than she is, and his role is to remind her of her oaths to the sorcerer – and to make sure that the Ring gets to Gorlanc, no matter what.

Hirlinon:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
18	4
Parry	Armour
6	1d
Skills	
Personality, 4	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 3
Perception, 3	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Dagger	4
Special Abilities	
Poisoned Weapons	Bewilder

Poisoned Weapons: If Hirlindon injures a foe with his dagger, he may spend a point of Hate to force the foe to make a Protection test as if he had struck a Piercing Blow. If that test fails, the foe is Poisoned.
Bewilder: Hirlinon's version of *Bewilder* involves misdirection, whirling capes and throwing blinding dust in the eyes of his foes.

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Dagger	3		12	-

Berelas, the Ringbearer
Berelas is older than she looks. She was one of the Woodmen captives taken into Dol Guldur, and there she learned terrible secrets of the Enemy. Released, she fell into the service of a lesser evil, Gorlanc the Sorcerer. Despite all these horrors, she has not entirely fallen to the Shadow, and is still capable of mercy and even kindness. She serves Gorlanc because she fears the Enemy, and believes that only a strong hero can hope to stand against Sauron when he returns. She sees Gorlanc like a younger, more forceful Radagast, and prays that if she brings him the Ring and helps him grow in power, he will be able to drive away the Shadow.

Berelas is deluding herself in this – Gorlanc is a servant of Sauron, or at best a rival like Saruman the White, not a hero – but she has no other hope to cling to.

Surface Details
A woman from Mirkwood, dressed in simple travelling clothes and a heavy green cloak. She wears a scarf, even in summer.

First Impressions
She seems to be Hirlinon's assistant. Sometimes, she wanders into the woods alone or with Eoin to search for herbs.

Close Associates
Hirlinon, Edoric, Eoin.

Digging Deeper
A successful **Insight** roll reveals that Berelas and Edoric seem to have some sort of a bond – or an understanding. Certainly, she spends a lot of time talking to the caravan captain, and he smiles when she sings.

She's a talented healer, much more so than Hirlinon. Anything of actual potency that he sells from his wagon of cure-alls was made by her.

Secrets
Berelas carries a Wondrous Artefact, the Ring of Seven Jewels, on a chain around her neck. She won't wear the Ring herself, but if she or the Ring are threatened, she calls a Shade from Gorlanc (see **The Cold Shade**, page 82).

If the caravan is attacked by night, or if Berelas or Hirlinon are ambushed, then the Cold Shade automatically appears to protect them. During the day, the Shade is less powerful and less supernaturally aware of danger, so Berelas must consciously summon the creature.

She might also summon the Shade if she suspects the caravan is being spied upon, and sent it out to hunt for nearby player characters.

Berelas:

Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	Hate
18	5
Parry	Armour
5	2d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 4
Movement, 3	Custom, 2
Perception, 3	Vocation, 4
Weapon Skills	
Dagger	3
Bow	3
Special Abilities	
Shade-caller	-

Shade-caller: Instead of attacking, Berelas may call the Cold Shade. The creature appears a short time later.

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Dagger	3	10	12	Poison
Bow	5	10	14	Poison*

*Gorlanc's Poison: A hero Poisoned by Berelas becomes feverish for a number of rounds equal to the roll of a Success die (in addition to being Poisoned.) A feverish hero suffers a modifier of +6 to the TN of all actions. The effects of Gorlanc's poison wear off after a full week.

Mirabar of Dorwinion

Mirabar is a merchant from the Land of Vineyards; he brings cloth from the East and trades it for gems and crafted items from the Blue Mountains. Most of the baggage ponies in the caravan belong to him, and he's the one who hired Edoric. Some years ago, he loaned a large sum of money to the dwarf-smith Vig, and he wants that debt repaid. When Vig protested that he didn't have the coin to repay Mirabar, the merchant decided to accompany the caravan himself (he normally dwells in the Vales of Anduin, across the mountains).

Attribute Level: 3
Specialities: Mountaineer, Trading
Distinctive Features: Proud, Suspicious
Relevant Skills: Riddle ♦♦, Insight ♦♦♦♦

Surface Details

An old man, with a face like an aged crow, all beak and dark wary eyes. He's bundled in furs despite the warm weather; he has many rings of gold on his old fingers. He's the only member of the caravan to ride instead of walking.

First Impressions

If he makes it as far as Bree, it'll be something of a miracle. He seems half-dead from the journey.

Close Associates

No one. Edoric and Eoin obey his commands, but he doesn't welcome their company. He tolerates Berelas, glares at Hirlinon, and has little time for the Dwarves, who seem subdued in his presence.

Digging Deeper

Mirabar keeps a ledger of accounts with him, and there's a column of red ink with Vig's name on it. The player-heroes could learn this by sneaking into the camp and reading the journal, or by eavesdropping on Mirabar when he makes snide comments about Vig's indebtedness.

He hates the Rangers, believing them to be nothing more than bandits. He blames them for the loss of several of his trade caravans en route to the Blue Mountains (in truth, the Rangers have saved far more of Mirabar's caravans from meeting grisly ends, but there's no reasoning with an unreasoned prejudice).

Secrets

Mirabar believes he nearly died at the Forsaken Inn. He's sure that he glimpsed Death come to claim him and carry him away beyond the circles of the world. What he actually saw was the Shade sent by Gorlanc, the one that killed Mallor, but Mirabar's convinced that he's going to die on his journey. He's debating whether to forgive Vig his debt as a last kindness, or write up a letter to his business partners transferring the lien on the loan to them.

Confronting the Caravan

If the player-heroes decide to confront the caravan directly before it reaches Bree, treat it as an encounter. Edoric does most of the talking for the caravan, although he looks to Mirabar for guidance at times.

Set Tolerance

Edoric has little patience for accusations and interruptions. The initial Tolerance is set equal to the highest Wisdom among the company. Reduce his Tolerance by 1 if there are any Rangers of the North in the company.

Introduction

If the companions barge on to the Road declaring that one of the caravan murdered someone at the Forsaken Inn and they are here to bring a reckoning in the name of justice – that's definitely **Awe**, and at a higher TN than normal, too.

If they try a more circuitous approach, perhaps by asking to speak privately with Edoric, then they can introduce themselves with **Courtesy**.

Interaction

Firstly, Edoric wants reassurance that the companions are not bandits planning to rob his caravan. Failing to provide proof of the player-heroes' good intentions, perhaps with **Courtesy** or **Persuade**, quickly ends the encounter.

Identifying the murder victim as a Ranger counts as a failed roll; so does making an accusation without proof. The best approach is to present evidence that one of the caravan members was involved in Mallor's death, and letting Edoric come to the conclusion that the matter deserves investigation.

Edoric's preference is to wait until Bree before coming to any conclusions. He's wary of any suggestions that justice be carried out on the Road.

Evaluating the Outcome of the Encounter

Keep a track of how many successes the company managed to accrue.

0 to 1: The company are brigands! To arms! It's a pitched battle between the members of the caravan and the player-heroes. Remember, most of the caravan-travellers are mostly innocent, and killing them is a terrible Misdeed worthy of Shadow.

2-4: Edoric agrees that the matter warrants investigation, and suggests that the caravan meet the company in Bree. The caravan shall be there in a few days; the company, being less encumbered, may travel faster (in other words, he doesn't want the companions travelling with the caravan). The Reeve of Bree is as close as this part of the world comes to a law-giver – let the strangers present their concerns to the Reeve, and let him deal with it.

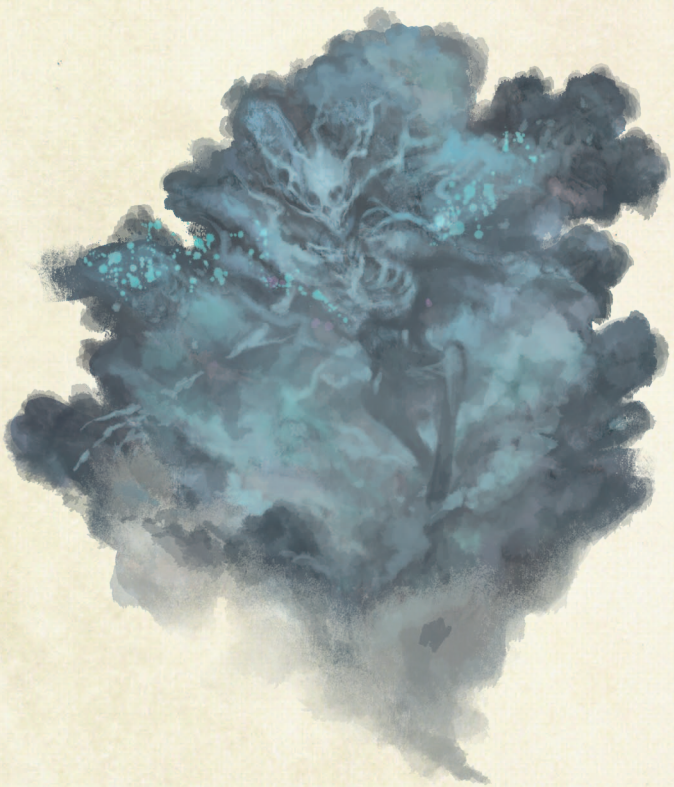
4-6: As above, but Edoric agrees to let the player-heroes accompany the caravan as far as Bree.

7+: Edoric is convinced that the matter deserves immediate investigation, and stands aside. Only the close associates of the suspect will fight back if the player-heroes press the matter. (For example, if the players accuse one of the Dwarves, then all the Dwarves will band together to protect their relative. If they accuse Eoin, the lad is on his own.)

The Cold Shade

This creature might be an undead spirit, or it could be the malign expression of Gorlanc's will – or perhaps both? Maybe the sorcerer called a wraith out of some ancient tomb in the north, and now uses it like a mask to project his mind across the leagues. Whatever the Cold Shade's nature, its purpose is to defend the Ring that Gorlanc craves. The player-heroes encounter the Shade if:

- Berelas or Hirlinon are attacked by night.
- Berelas feels threatened by day and summons the Shade.
- Berelas calls the Shade to hunt for spies and eavesdroppers.



The Cold Shade appears as swiftly as the wind blows if the Ring-bearer is threatened by night. During the day, the Shade prefers to hide from the light of the sun and easily goes astray, so it takes longer to arrive and must be consciously summoned by Berelas or Hirlinon by speaking Gorlanc's name coupled with an invocation in the Black Speech of Mordor.

The Cold Shade resembles a cloud of icy mist, as though someone had exhaled heavily on a cold night. When the moonlight catches it at certain angles, a face and the suggestion of a Man-like form can be seen in the swirling tendrils of mist.

The Shade brings a bitter chill with it, as if it somehow carries darkest midwinter wherever it goes. Ideally, run **Part Four – Strangers in the Woods** during or just after a Cold Shade attack.

The Cold Shade:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
30	7
Parry	Armour
6	2d
Skills	
Personality, 3	Survival, 1
Movement, 4	Custom, 3
Perception, 3	Vocation, 3
Weapon Skills	
Icy Touch	4
Special Abilities	
Ghost-form	Fell Speed
Craven	Fear of Fire
Hate Sunlight	Thing of Terror (at night only)

Ghost-form: Most weapons cannot affect this creature; only magical weapons can bite its incorporeal flesh. See the *Rivendell* supplement, page 76.
Icy Touch: A hero struck by this attack becomes Weary for the rest of the combat. If a hero is Wounded by an Icy Touch attack, they are paralysed with cold and cannot move until warmed up.

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Icy Touch	4		18	Pierce

Wild Beasts

This is an optional scene that can be inserted instead of, or some night after, meeting the Elves (see page 84).

The presence of the Ring of Seven Jewels does not pass unnoticed to the eyes of the servants of the Enemy. Normally, wolves stay far away from Bree, but tonight the curse laid upon the treasure stolen from the Elves draws them in. The wolf pack is a large one, led by a white beast that must have come down from the frozen wastes of the far North.

The whole caravan is in grave danger. More importantly, if any player-heroes are sneaking about this night, they're at risk of being discovered.

Hiding from the Wolves

Staying hidden from the wolves requires a **Stealth** test (TN 16). If near the Chetwood, the best thing to do is climb a tree; otherwise, the characters must hide amid the underbrush and hope the wolves pass by.

Battling the Wolves

There are three Wild Wolves for every companion, plus more attacking the caravan, plus the White Wolf of the North.

Ordinary Wolf:

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
12	1
Parry	Armour
5	2d
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 0
Perception, 2	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Bite	2
Special Abilities	
Fear of Fire	Great Leap
Seize Victim	-

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	3	10	14	Pierce

White Wolf of the North:

Attribute Level	
5	
Endurance	Hate
20	6
Parry	Armour
6	2d
Skills	
Personality, 2	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 0
Perception, 2	Vocation, 0
Weapon Skills	
Bite	3
Special Abilities	
Fear of Fire	Great Leap
Craven	Commanding Voice
Lure of the Ring	-

Lure of the Ring: The White Wolf of the North regains 1 point of Hate when it's blocked from attacking Berelas.

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Bite	5	10	18	Pierce

The Caravan and the Wolves

If the wolves make it past the company, then Edoric efficiently rallies his defences. Eoin, Edoric and all the Dwarves except Vogar form a defensive line, hewing at the wolves or trying to drive them away with fire. Mirabar, Hirlindon, Berelas and Vogar hide behind this line, trying to keep the pack animals calm.

At one point, a wolf leaps past the defensive line and lands in the middle of the caravan, snarling and biting. There's a sudden shriek, and a cloud of mist (the Cold Shade) flashes past. The wolf falls over, stone dead, but the ponies are spooked and try to scatter. By the time the remaining wolves are driven away and the pack animals gathered back together, no one recalls the strange blast of icy air that shot through the camp (and Hirlinon is careful to plant a dagger in the wolf's flank to explain the creature's death.)

– Part Four –
Strangers in the Woods

In this part of the adventure, the player-heroes meet a Wandering Company of the Elves in the Chetwood near Bree. There are two ways to introduce this scene.

The most dramatic and thematic way is to have the Elves show up to drive away the fell presence of the Cold Shade. The High Elves have great spiritual power, and a company of them blazes in the wraith-world like a forest fire or the rising sun.

The Cold Shade hisses and melts away like mist before the dawn. *"What was that?"* asks the leader of the Elves. *"It fled before our presence, and the name of Elbereth. Were you foolish enough to call up some evil spirit?"*

If you can't engineer such a dramatic entrance, then the Elves might encounter the company as they spy on the trade caravan. The Elves, being wood-wise and stealthy, are amused by their attempts at eavesdropping.

The Elves might even play tricks on the company, like dropping apples on their heads or whispering in their ears as they lie hidden. Once they tire of such mockery, the Elves reveal themselves and greet the company.

The leader of the Elves is Cenedriliel.

Encountering the Elves

Run this scene as an extended encounter. Once the Elves' Tolerance is exhausted, they vanish. If the companions make it through the night successfully, the Elves leave gifts for them in the morning.

Set Tolerance

The initial Tolerance for Cenedriliel is set equal to the highest Wisdom amongst the company. Increase the Tolerance by 1 if there are any Hobbits, Rangers of the North or High Elves of Rivendell in the company.

Introduction

Cenedriliel introduces herself and her fellow High Elves, explaining that she and most of her company are travelling West, towards the Havens, and intend to depart Middle-earth. Some of their number, though, are Elves of the Grey Havens, who have come to meet them at Rivendell to guide them across Eriador.

The companions should make rolls of **Courtesy** or **Song** to introduce themselves. Attempting to use **Awe** automatically fails.

Assuming the company do not fail this first hurdle, Cenedriliel leads them a little deeper into the Chetwood, to a clearing where there are a number of white cloths laden with food spread out on the ground. Lamps hanging from the trees burn brightly but don't seem to illuminate the glade.

The characters have the strange impression that the light is coming from the stars overhead, as if the stars burn brighter here. The companions are invited to join the feast.

Interaction

Possible rolls include **Riddle**, **Courtesy**, **Song** or **Lore**; the Elves stop talking to the companions in favour of singing and merriment when the conversation bores them. Likely topics of conversation:

- **The Death of the Ranger:** *"We knew Mallor, although he rarely joined in our merriment. His heart was true, and it grieves us to hear that he has died. It would be a worthy deed to bring justice to his murderers – but Mallor would have been the first to remind you that justice is a fleeting shadow, and there is more woe and weeping in Middle-earth than there are triumphs. Long have we contended against the Enemy, and all too often in vain. We feast tonight, then, because we are here and it is summer in the Chetwood, and for no more glorious reason. Perhaps your quest will be successful, and if it is, we shall rejoice. But Mallor is still dead. Remember, mortality is the gift of Men; his passing may be part of a greater design, one not intended by the murderer."*

- **Helping find the Killer:** *"This is your task, not ours. We are travelling, travelling West and West again, and shall not tarry here. Look for us again when you need us, not when you desire an easier road."*

- **The Caravan:** *"There is a treasure there, a power that is familiar to some in my company. We knew it came out of Eregion some time ago. But it is a trap, a snare that would hold us here, tying us to a past we gave up long ago. I can speak no more of it, save this: malice takes many forms, and some are better hidden than others."*

- **The Cold Shade:** *"I have bent my thought upon the creature, and it shall not trouble you again this night. It dwells far away, but came when it was called. There was a living will behind it, friend, as shadowed a soul as can be imagined."*

Evaluating the Outcome of the Encounter

After the conversation comes to an end, count up the number of successes obtained by the companions.

0-1: The feast ends abruptly; the Elf-lights suddenly snuff out and the player-heroes fall instantly asleep. The next day, the company will have to hurry to catch up with the caravan.

2-4: The next morning, the companions find the left-over food from the feast all wrapped up and waiting for them; this meal removes 4 points of Fatigue or 1 point of Shadow from each companion.

4-6: As above, but one of the companions also has a prophetic dream, giving a clue about some member of the caravan, or about Gorlanc.

7+: As 2-3, but Cenedriliel stays up all night talking with the companion with the highest Wisdom (use **Lore** as a tie-breaker), and reveals that someone in the caravan is carrying a lesser Ring of Power, and that Cenedriliel suspects that the Cold Shade is somehow guarding or watching over this ring.

- Part Five -
Not To Strike Without Need

A day out from Bree, the caravan comes upon a small byroad leading to Staddle. A young girl named Daisy flags the caravan down as they pass, and begs for Hirlinon's help. Her mother Heather is sick, she says, and she begs the healer to come quick to help her. She lives in a cottage outside Combe.

A debate ensues. Mirabar (and, hence, Edoric) wants to continue on to Bree immediately. Hirlinon tries to sell the girl a cure-all, but Berelas insists that they should divert to Staddle and examine the girl's mother in person (Berelas is a better healer than Hirlinon, but maintains the fiction that he's the brilliant apothecary and she's just an assistant).

The Dwarves don't care, until it becomes clear that Berelas and Hirlinon are going to the cottage, whereupon Narvi and Narvig volunteer to 'escort' the healer (to ensure they don't let her gold ring out of their sight). Vig objects at that, as he can't mind Vogar on his own.

In the end (assuming the companions don't intervene), the agreed plan is that Berelas, Hirlinon, Eoin and Narvi will take the side road to Staddle, while the rest of the caravan waits for them at the fork in the road.

A Caravan Divided

The split in the caravan offers an excellent opportunity for the company to spy on or question Loremaster characters. It's especially easy to question Eoin, as he's off his guard now that the caravan is back in the familiar lands around Bree-hill.

The Cottage

Heather Rushlight lives with her two daughters in a cottage outside Combe; they farm chickens and cows, and weave cloth. Ever-industrious are the Rushlights. The cottage is a large one, built by the late Mr Rushlight (dead four years ago; if the players played through *Old Bones and Skin*, then they likely saved his burial mound from being despoiled by the Old Troll), and there's a handsome window facing out to the south. The companions can easily spy on events inside the house through this window. Now, Heather Rushlight has come down with a fever, and her younger daughter Rose is also growing ill as she tends to her mother.

Healing the Rushlights

If the companions get involved, then anyone with ranks in **Healing** (or an appropriate Trait, like *Leechcraft*) recognises that Heather and Rose are dying and are unlikely to recover without aid.

The intercession of someone with great healing powers is needed (a Woodman with *Herbal Remedies*, an Elf of Rivendell with *Skill of the Eldar*, or a suitable Trait plus a TN 18 **Healing** test).

If a player character can heal the Rushlights, then Berelas may be spared using the Ring of Seven Jewels.

Using the Ring

Berelas comes to the same conclusion about the prospects of the patients: their illness is beyond any ordinary skill to heal. While Hirlinon tries to sell potions and herbal remedies to the dying women, Berelas examines her patients – and then realises that the only way to save them is to use the power of the Ring of Seven Jewels.

She orders the fires lit and stoked, even though it is the height of summer. She has blankets placed on the bed, because she knows that putting on the Ring will attract the attention of Gorlanc's Cold Shade. She then orders everyone, including young Daisy, to return to the caravan. Eoin, however, circles back to keep an eye on her "beloved" Berelas. The player-heroes may also be in a position to observe what happens next.

Berelas puts on the Ring of Seven Jewels and uses its power to heal the sick. As soon as she puts on the Ring, she draws Gorlanc's attention; the Cold Shade flies as fast as the wind, howling down from the empty lands north of the Shire to investigate. It rushes into the cottage through the chimney, freezing the fire in the hearth in an instant. It whirls around Berelas, looking for signs of danger, then races out of the cottage again and circles around.

If the companions are nearby, it attacks them; otherwise, it spots Eoin and decides that he must be a threat – why else would Berelas have touched the Ring? The Shade does not kill him, but terrifies him half to death; he's left shivering and whimpering in the undergrowth.

Inside the cottage, Berelas attends to Daisy and Heather; their sickness is gone, but they are half-frozen to death from the presence of the Cold Shade. Berelas hastily relights the fire and warms them with blankets until they revive. Both mutter and moan about "seven shining jewels". (If a hero overhears *that*, a successful **Lore** check (TN 16) might dig up a memory of the Ring of Seven Jewels.)

To Bree!

Mirabar refuses to squander any more time on this affair; he orders Edoric to move on to Bree as soon as Berelas and Narvi are back. *"The moon-calf can catch up,"* he says, *"we're only a short walk to the Cross-Roads."* They leave without Eoin, assuming that he's wandered off to greet friends or family now that he's back in Bree-land.

Once the caravan arrives in Bree, run **Knives in Bree** or **The Matter Before the Reeve** depending on the current situation.

Forcing a Confrontation

If the player-heroes ambush Berelas or confront the caravan at this point (perhaps prompted by the unnatural events witnessed at the cottage), then Edoric insists that since they are less than a day's travel from Bree, they all continue onto the town and let the Reeve there resolve any accusations of witchcraft or murder.

– Part Six –
Knives in Bree

This part of the adventure assumes that the player characters have not accused Berelas of Mallor's murder.

The caravan stops at The Prancing Pony for the night. In fact, declares Mirabar, they're going to stay here for two or three nights. Even the old man's greed and impatience cannot overcome the ache in his frail old bones, and he needs to rest. If Eoin's still missing, then The Pony's pot-boys help unload the caravan instead.

Hirlinon and Berelas share a room; Edoric and Mirabar a second; and the Dwarves take a third.

Whispers in the Commons

Hirlinon meets with other agents of Gorlanc in the common-room of the inn. If you played through *Old Bones and Skins*, and by some astounding confluence of unlikely circumstances, the Dwarf Grór *isn't* lying dead somewhere in the Midgewater Marshes, then use him. Otherwise, it's an ill-favoured vagabond who the companions vaguely recall sitting near Grór when they last saw the Dwarf.

If the company eavesdrops in on this conversation, they hear Hirlinon promising his companion that he and Berelas will be on their way to "the fort" first thing in the morning, and that while there have been a few problems on the Road, the treasure is still kept secret and safe.

Afterwards, Narvi comes over and tells Hirlinon that, behind the bar, is a bottle of the same Dwarven spirits that they shared on the road. Hirlinon proceeds to get quite drunk.

The Dwarves

The arrival of Dwarven traders attracts the attention of the worthies of Bree; before the Dwarves can even have a sip of beer, they're busy selling ironmongery and arranging to repair farmtools and other metalwork the next day. Hirlinon, seeing an opportunity, starts hawking his cure-alls, declaiming loudly that he rescued the Rushlights of Combe from the brink of death with his herbal remedies.

In the common-room, Mirabar demands that Vig hand over all the money the Dwarves earned that afternoon as part-payment of the family debt. Grudgingly, Vig gives him what he earned; the Dwarves nurse a single half-pint each and eat nothing but bread and cheese, because that is all they can afford.

That humiliation is the last the Dwarves can bear. That night, Narvi and Narvig plan to break into Berelas' room and steal her jewelled ring. They intend to sell it to their kin in the Blue Mountains, and use the money to pay Mirabar back in full.

If the Player-Heroes...

...have rooms at the inn, then they overhear the Dwarves moving around at night, or spot them leaving the common-room.

...are watching Berelas or the Dwarves, then they can spot the Dwarves sneaking into Berelas' room.

...are near The Pony, then they can get involved in the altercation when Berelas and Hirlinon try to flee.

... are nowhere nearby, then their involvement in the final scenes of this adventure may hang on Virtues and Blessings like *Foresighted, Woeful Foresight* or *Night-Goer* to give the players forewarning of what is about to happen.

Uproar in Bree

Should the players not intercede, this is what happens: Narvi and Narvig sneak into Berelas' room. Hirlinon snores in one bed, drunk on Dwarven spirits. Berelas lies sleeping in the other. It's a warm summer's night. On the nightstand by the bed, the Ring of Seven Jewels gleams invitingly in the moonlight. Narvig guards the door while Narvi creeps closer and closer. He's got a dagger in one hand, just in case, but surely he's light fingered enough to grab the Ring without anyone noticing...

As soon as the Dwarf touches the Ring, it calls the Cold Shade. The Shade comes shrieking over the walls and rooftops of the town, bursting in the open window seconds after it left Gorlanc's fort. It strikes Narvi down where he stands, and wakes Hirlinon and Berelas.

The two attempt to flee while Narvig grapples with the Shade. His shouts of alarm wake his uncle Vogar, who comes crashing down the hallway, a berserker in a nightshirt, waving his axe and shouting about Orcs and Dragons.

If the companions fail to intercede, then the adventure ends here. Hirlinon and Berelas scramble down over the stable roof, steal horses, and ride out of Bree like the wind. The gatekeeper of the North-gate is struck down by Hirlinon, and the pair vanish up the Greenway, never to be seen again in Bree. Everyone in the inn is distracted by Vogar's deranged rampage.

However, if the player-heroes are present, they've a chance to capture Berelas alive. Unlike Hirlinon, the healer's loyalty to Gorlanc is wavering; she won't kill unless her own life is threatened.

If the players haven't followed the clues, then a last-chance roll of **Insight** might avert catastrophe. The companions still need to drive the Cold Shade away in order to capture Berelas; she'll advise them to use torches and fire to dismay the Shade.

The Wardens of Bree finally arrive only after Berelas is in custody, and insist that she must be brought before the Reeve for judgement.

Hirlinon won't be taken alive; he'll either fight to the death or escape. If necessary, he will poison himself with his envenomed blade.

Berelas' Confession

If questioned, Berelas describes how she fell under the influence of Gorlanc and obtained the Ring of Seven Jewels. She met the sorcerer after she escaped the dungeons of Dol Guldur; he began by questioning her about her experiences in the Necromancer's fortress, and over time she became convinced that he was as wise as Radagast, but much braver and more active – the Enemy's enemy.

While travelling in the South, Gorlanc learned of a ring made by Elven-smiths of old. He searched for it for years, but other business drew him back to the North. He told Berelas that "cruel men and outlaws" drove him out of Eriador long ago, but that he intended to return to continue his investigations into the power of the fallen North-kingdom. In his absence, she was to continue the search for the Ring, and he taught her a spell that she should lay upon the artefact when she found it, "to free it from any curse", Gorlanc said.

After more years of searching, Berelas found the Ring of Seven Jewels, buried in a plot of earth that had once been a mass grave, and she cast the spell Gorlanc taught her as instructed. The action seemed to unburden her mind and allowed her to think clearly for the first time in many years - and she began to have doubts about her allegiance to Gorlanc. However, the spell also bound Gorlanc's Cold Shade to the Ring, cursing it.

Some time later, Berelas joined Hirlinon – another one of Gorlanc's men, and they came north to bring the Ring to the sorcerer. At the Forsaken Inn, someone eavesdropped on one of their conversations. Alarmed, Berelas caused the Cold Shade to intervene, and the evil spirit killed the Ranger Tarry-Mack.

Sympathetic roleplaying or, failing that, a well-timed Inspire test can convince Berelas that she was wrong to follow Gorlanc, and can atone by ensuring the sorcerer doesn't get his hands on the Ring of Seven Jewels, which might further increase his power. Reminding her of her role in Eoin's death (assuming the boy perished in Part Five – Not to Strike Without Need) will be especially effective.

Further questions can elicit the following:

- Gorlanc has a fortress somewhere north of the Bree-land, and a fair number of followers. She doesn't know where the fort is, or how many men serve him. Hirlinon was to guide her to Gorlanc.
- If anyone else touches the Ring, the Cold Shade will attack. Only she can bear the Ring safely.
- She fears that she cannot stay in Bree, even if arrested. Sooner or later, Gorlanc will come for his prize. He may attack Bree, or send some plague or curse down upon the town if he does not get his Ring.

– Part Seven – Before The Reeve

There are two possible ways to enter this scene.

One possibility is that the players accused some member of Edoric's caravan on the Road, and Edoric agreed to put the case before the Reeve. The other option is that the companions captured Berelas after the events of **Part Six – Knives in the Dark**, and have now brought her before the Reeve for justice.

The Reeve is Bree's mayor, magistrate and lawmaker; in days when there was a king, he was the king's man and ruled in his name. Now, the Reeve is an elected position, advised by councillors from the four villages of Bree-land.

The current Reeve is old Twyc Greenleaf, a man in his seventy-fifth year with hair like snow and skin like cracked parchment. He spends most of his time in office napping in the Reeve's House, while his young factotum Cole does all the work. The one thing that gets Twyc's blood flowing is sitting in judgement over an actual *criminal*; he holds the peace of Bree to be a sacred thing, and punishes lawbreakers harshly. Most lawbreaking in Bree involves sheep-stealing or arguments over hedgerows; it's been many, many years since Tywc sat in judgement over a potential *murderer*.

And even longer since there was a hanging at the Crossroads.

The Jail at Bree

Prisoners in the custody of the Reeve are held in a locked room in the Reeve's house, and guarded by one of Bree's Wardens (probably Tad Tillfield – see page 18). As Bree is under the protection of the Rangers, these Wardens usually have little to do other than deal with stray animals; actually guarding a prisoner is a novelty for them.

If Berelas is the prisoner, and she has not already admitted her guilt to the companions, run **Berelas' Confession** now before the trial.

The Accused

If it is Berelas in the dock, then the adventure is almost over. The Reeve's decision will determine what options are open to her in **Part Eight – The Choices of Mistress Berelas**.

If it is some other suspect in the dock, like one of the Dwarves, then the events of **Part Six – Knives in Bree** may yet come to pass. In that case, don't run a second court case – go straight on to **Part Eight**. If the players insist on bringing a second case before the Reeve, summarise the events based on the outcome of the first trial. (For example, if the companions exceeded the Reeve's Tolerance in the first trial, they're not going to get a good outcome in the second.)

Meeting the Reeve

The court case with the Reeve is resolved as an encounter. Instead of a fixed set of outcomes, there are two possible situations – the adventurers may be arguing for guilt (*"Berelas murdered Mallor, known in Bree as Tarry-Mack! We want justice for our comrade!"*) or clemency (*"Yes, technically Berelas killed Tarry-Mack, but really it was the ghost in her ring. And if you keep her imprisoned in Bree, then Gorlanc's going to attack the town."*) If the company exceed the Reeve's Tolerance, then they get a bad outcome. If they argue their case convincingly, the Reeve's decision goes their way.

Tywc is old, cranky and close-minded. Any talk of sorcery or the supernatural is simply dismissed as "Elf-nonsense". This is Bree, and Bree is nothing if not sensible. Only outlaws and sheep-stealers living in the Old Forest talk about ghosts and magic rings. This isn't a fairy story.

Set Tolerance

The initial Tolerance is set at 1. Increase it by 1 if there are any Bree-folk or Hobbits of the Shire in the company. Remember to take into account the Standing rating of either Bree-folk or Hobbit heroes, if any are present.

Introduction

Introductions must be made with rolls of **Courtesy**. The companions must also introduce the accused, which may be done with a roll of **Awe** (prosecution) or a roll of **Persuade** (defence).

Interaction

The companions must either prove the suspect is guilty, or plead for clemency. This might done with rolls of:

- **Persuade**, to make speeches before the judge.
- **Riddle**, to ask clever questions of the suspect.
- **Lore**, to quote obscure aspects of Bree-law.
- **Insight**, to gain, well, insight into Twyc Greenleaf's character. He despises law-breakers and has no patience for talk of the supernatural, but fears for Bree's safety.
- **Awe**, to convince Twyc that this is a threat far beyond the ability of the Wardens of Bree to cope with.
- **Inspire**, either to convince Twyc that justice is not always served best by a strict adherence to the law, or to convince Berelas to volunteer information about her own experiences.

Evaluating the Outcome of the Encounter

Once all arguments are concluded, compare the result to the table below, using whichever column of successes matches the company's argument.

Arguing for Conviction	Outcome	Arguing for Clemency
Tolerance Exceeded	Prisoner is freed unconditionally	7+
1	"Not within my purview"	5-6
2-4	Custody of the Rangers	2-4
5-6	Imprisoned indefinitely	1
7+	Condemned to death	Tolerance Exceeded

Prisoner is freed unconditionally: Twyc dismisses the case. Either the adventurers have utterly failed to prove that the prisoner was involved in the death of the Ranger, or they have convinced Twyc that he should free Berelas immediately.

"**Not within my purview**": Twyc washes his hands of the case. Maybe the prisoner is guilty, maybe not. It's not a matter for Bree; what happens on the Road can stay on the Road. The prisoner is freed but banished from Bree; any companions other than Bree-folk or Shire-hobbits are likewise encouraged to leave.

Custody of the Rangers: Tarry-Mack was one of them Rangers; let them decide what's to be done. Twyc decides to keep the prisoner in custody until a Ranger shows up in Bree. If there's a Ranger in the company, so much the better; Twyc releases the prisoner into the Ranger's care, and suggests that both prisoner and Ranger leave Bree immediately. Otherwise, the company must go fetch a Ranger if they want to get Berelas out of Bree's jail.

Imprisoned Indefinitely: Twyc needs to consult with the councillors of Bree, and consult the books of law and precedent, and think about the matter deeply. There'll be no decision before Year's End at the earliest. Until then, the prisoner will remain in Bree's jail.

Condemned to Death: Not a living soul in Bree can remember the last time the ancient punishment was used; no doubt there were crimes committed in the dark days of the Fell Winter and other bad times, but they are long past. Still, there is a place near the Cross-roads where a gallows might be built, and cold steel enough in the mind of Twyc Greenleaf to order such a punishment.

Using the Ring of Seven Jewels

All of Twyc's doubts about the supernatural can be dismissed in an instant if the heroes compel Berelas to call the Cold Shade. Of course, summoning up a murderous undead horror in the middle of Bree is the fastest way to get forever banished from the town short of burning down The Prancing Pony. Still, if the company's chief concern is the security of the North and not their standing in town, it is an option.

- Part Eight -
The Choices of Mistress Berelas

By this point in the adventure, Berelas should be in the custody of either the Reeve of Bree, or the company. She has repented of her allegiance to Gorlanc, but needs to decide what to do with the Ring.

She looks to the companions for guidance: what should she do? If the player-heroes are low-ranking adventurers from Bree, then all they can do is advise, for the final fate of the Ring of Seven Jewels is out of their hands. However, if the companions are more experienced adventurers or Rangers, then they can aid Berelas in finding her destiny. What is to be done with the Ring of Seven Jewels?

- **Surrender the Ring of Seven Jewels:** Gorlanc's spell ensures that if anyone other than Berelas touches the Ring of Seven Jewels, the Cold Shade will be summoned. Only Berelas' death can break this spell, and allow someone else to safely bear the Ring. If the company feel that her murder of Tarry-Mack warrants death, she will yield to their judgement.

- **Hide the Ring:** If the Ring goes untouched, the Cold Shade won't be able to find it. It took Gorlanc many, many years to find the Ring of Seven Jewels in the first place; if the company helps Berelas hide it with sufficient cunning, he might not be able to find it again before he dies of old age. (For double irony, the adventurers could hide the treasure in the Black Barrow – see page 62).

- **Destroy the Ring of Seven Jewels:** The Great Rings of Power are hard to destroy, save by Dragon-fire or the fires of the Cracks of Doom, but lesser rings can be unmade. Doing so requires a prolonged Craft action (TN 18), requiring a total of 7 successes. As soon as the Ring is cast into the flames of the forge, the Cold Shade appears to defend the treasure. The other heroes must defend their companion as they unmake the masterwork with a hammer.

- **Flee into the Wild:** Berelas came from Mirkwood originally; if she runs, and never stops running, then maybe she can stay ahead of Gorlanc's minions long enough to stop the sorcerer from ever getting the Ring he so desires.

- **Flee to Rivendell:** If the companions know about the hidden valley of Imladris, they could bring Berelas there and seek the protection of Master Elrond.

- **Go to the Elves:** If the companions are on good terms with Cenedriliel and her Elves, they could seek them out and ask them for help.

The Rest of the Caravan

Depending on the players' actions, the rest of the caravan may be dead, bitterly hateful of one another, or even redeemed and won over as allies. Here's how the company might solve problems with the other Loremaster characters:

Edoric

Protecting the caravan members, especially Eoin and Mirabar, is all it takes to convince Edoric that the company are worthy allies.

Eoin

Saving Eoin's life in **Part Five – Not to Strike Without Need** wins him over; doubly so if he can help Berelas escape her fate.

The Dwarves

Not killing Narvi and Narvig is a good start. The characters will be Dwarf-friends for life if they help Vig pay off his debt to Mirabar.

Gorlanc's Last Stroke

Gorlanc will not leave his Ring slip through his fingers so easily. He sends a few of his best and swiftest warriors to reclaim the Ring now that Berelas has betrayed him. Hirlinon joins this troupe of killers if he is still alive.

The band travels to Bree (or to the last place where Gorlanc knows Berelas was) with orders to abduct Berelas and recover the Ring of Seven Jewels. If Berelas is on the Road with the player-heroes, they'll try to take her by force. If she's in the Reeve's jail in Bree, then they'll break into the jail and grab her in the dead of night – they are not above slitting the throat of a Warden to do so.

There are two of Gorlanc's warriors for every companion (plus Hirlinon, if he's still alive). At night, the Cold Shade joins the battle.

If it's dramatically fitting, have Vig, Vogar and the two younger Dwarves, or Edoric and Eoin, join the fray if the company are ambushed on the Road or attacked in Bree.

Gorlanc's Warriors:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
14	3
Parry	Armour
4+2	1d+1
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Axe	3

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Axe	5		18	Break Shield

- Epilogue -
The Assault on Gorlanc's Fort

Gorlanc believes he can claim all the secrets and treasures of Eriador. He believes that the Dúnedain are nothing but outlaws and wanderers, stumbling blindly through the ruins of their former kingdoms. He believes that the North is empty of any who might stand against him, that the forces of Arnor and Angmar smashed one another to pieces and left no power of consequence in the North, just as Gondor and Mordor seem, in his eyes, bound to destroy one another.

He reckons without the strength of Rivendell.

If the companions are simple Hobbits of the Shire or Bree-folk, then they need take no part in the war on Gorlanc. In the coming year, they hear rumours. Wild tales of flashing lights in the sky to the north, of a host of Elves passing through the woods, armed for war.

Gandalf is seen in the Shire several times that autumn, hastening back and forth as if on some important errand. The Bounders are especially busy that winter, as some especially nasty and aggressive Men trespass over the borders as they flee south.

Rangers of the North or High Elves of Rivendell, or heroes of great renown out of Wilderland, may play a part of the assault on Gorlanc's fort. Loremasters may expand this into a full adventure if desired, but with Glorfindel, Elladan and Elrohir in the vanguard of the attacking forces, Gorlanc's motley crew of thieves and tomb robbers never have any hope of victory, especially without the Ring of Seven Jewels.

If Gorlanc has the Ring of Seven Jewels then the battle is far more costly for the forces of Rivendell: The sorcerer is still defeated, but Glorfindel and his followers must lay siege to the fort instead of overwhelming it. (For the ultimate fate of Gorlanc the sorcerer, see *Holed Up*, on page 107).

holed up in - staddle -

- **When:** This quest could be set at in the later summer or autumn of any year, and spans a number of months. It is designed to be run after the events of *Strange Men, Strange Roads*.
- **Where:** The adventure begins on the Greenway before heading into the Old Forest, and ending in and around Bree itself.
- **What:** The company must hunt down the last fugitives of a band of evil Men that once troubled the North.
- **Why:** Gorlanc has been defeated, but these last criminals must be defeated for the safety of Bree.
- **Who:** Gorlanc, the broken sorcerer.

Adventuring Phase

This adventure is divided into five parts, which begins on the Greenway and ends in Bree.

Part One - Down Rode the Huntress

The player-heroes meet a messenger from the Rangers, and help her chase some fugitives from Gorlanc's band who have escaped down the Greenway.

Part Two - Into Eastern Chetwood

The chase brings the companions into the dangerous eastern reaches of Chetwood, where they have several unusual encounters (but there's no sign of the sorcerer himself.)

Part Three - Things out of Place

Back in Bree, the companions look for signs that something is amiss, and discover strange behaviour in one Hobbit family out of Staddle.

Part Four - Watching & Waiting

The company learns more about the threat in Staddle, and make contact with the Undertree family.

Part Five - Death under the Apple Trees

Armed with this knowledge, the company can sneak into the Undertree Smial and battle Gorlanc's followers.

Epilogue - A Harvest Moon

The company consider their adventurers and may decide to explore beyond the familiar fields they know.

Gorlanc's Dead!

If the player-heroes take part in the siege of Gorlanc's fort (see page 93), then it's possible they kill Gorlanc before the sorcerer can escape. (Players are usually utterly determined to hunt down and kill their foes, after all – had a player been present at the Battle of Fornost, when the Witch-king fled and Glorfindel prophesied *"not by the hand of Man shall he fall"*, then doubtless that player would have immediately tried drawing back a bowstring with his teeth, arguing that an arrow loosed in that fashion wouldn't count as "the hand of Man".)

If necessary, you can replace Gorlanc with another villain in this adventure – Eirlinon, perhaps, or some apprentice of the sorcerer, or even some other evil-doer unrelated to Gorlanc. The villain needs a little knowledge of herb-lore and vile sorcery to put the main plot into motion.

- Part One - Down Rode The Huntress

Haleth, a Ranger of the North the company has met before if they played through the previous adventures presented in this supplement, is riding down the Greenway from the North, carrying important tidings.

If the companions reside in Bree, then they might meet her at the crossroads outside the town; alternatively, if she

already knows and trusts the company, she might show up on their doorstep in the dead of night.

A Weary Traveller

When the player-heroes meet Haleth, they immediately see that she is exhausted and bloodied from long strife. Instead of her customary travelling gear, she wears a helm and war-mail beneath her green cloak. She carries a spear as well as her sword.

"I have ridden far in haste" she says, "And I have need of your assistance. Gather what weapons ye have, and come quick! There are foes to hunt!"

While the companions gather their gear, Haleth explains what's going on. The forces of the Rangers and Rivendell destroyed the servants of the upstart sorcerer Gorlanc in battle near Fornost, and laid waste to his fort. However, the sorcerer and a few of his bodyguards escaped through a secret passage, and vanished into the wilderness. The chieftain of the Dúnedain sent Rangers out in all directions to find Gorlanc and put an end to his evil, and Haleth was among those sent south down the Greenway.

She found the trail of Gorlanc's followers on the road a few miles north of Bree. She wants the company to help her catch the sorcerer and his servants.

She believes that Gorlanc is likely trying to flee back to his old haunts beyond the Greyflood, in the land of Enedwaith, and that the best hope is to catch him before he gets too far south. She's sent word to the other Rangers, telling them that their quarry is fleeing south on the Greenway, but they may not arrive in time. So, she's turned to the company. In the unlikely event that your players refuse to aid Haleth, then skip to Part Four – Things Out Of Place and continue the adventure from there.

The Chase

Haleth leads the company north of the crossroads along the Greenway. Midway through the morning, the company's Look-out Men spot something strange dead ahead – a roiling, seething black shape on the path. Haleth spurs her horse and charges towards the shape, which explodes into thousands of birds. The companions can now see it for what it was – a huge flock of crows had landed on the road. *"One of the sorcerer's tricks"*, warns Haleth, *"see, he has muddled the trail!"*

My players are big shots!

If the companions are Rangers of the North, High Elves of Rivendell or other experienced heroes, they might have participated in the siege of Gorlanc's fort and you can skip this scene altogether – instead of Haleth asking the player-heroes to aid in her finding Gorlanc, make the chase for Gorlanc part of the aftermath of the siege (see page 93).

It's true – the ground ahead has been torn up by thousands of peck-marks and claw tracks, disguising any trail that Gorlanc might have left. Haleth orders the company to stop and wait while she surveys the surrounding ground. The company's Huntsman may also make a **Hunting** roll (TN 16) to read the signs.

Haleth guesses that Gorlanc's company has divided. Most have turned off the Greenway and gone east, while a smaller number have continued south, on down the road. She thinks that Gorlanc's gone south *("he would want to get as far away from the Rangers as he can. Maybe there was a disagreement over pay – the sorcerer's stolen gold was all lost with his fortress, and the greater part of his men followed him out of greed and fear, not loyalty")*. She declares that she'll keep going south in pursuit, and sends the player characters to follow the other group east.

If a player-hero succeeds at the **Hunting** test with a great or extraordinary success, then they get an uneasy feeling about Haleth's decision; the sorcerer's bootprints on the Greenway going south are very slightly different, a little lighter, compared to those the company saw earlier – maybe Gorlanc is trying to trick his pursuers, and he's actually fled eastward.

Persuading Haleth Otherwise

And that's exactly what happened. The player-heroes can convince Haleth to accompany them on the chase east with a successful roll of **Persuade**, if the Loremaster doesn't mind them being accompanied by a skilled and extremely talented Ranger. If Haleth does accompany the player-heroes, let them take the lead in any encounters – you might like to skip the combat scenes in **Part Two – Into Eastern Chetwood**, as Haleth's swift blade can deal with any of the foes the company encounter there.

Due East

Having parted with Haleth, the company pursue their quarries east, heading towards the woodland on the back of Bree-hill. It appears Gorlanc's minions are making straight for Chetwood.

The characters arrive on the edge of the wood at twilight. In the encroaching darkness, the Chetwood feels like an ancient, lonely place, beyond the comforts of the Bree-land. The trees mutter and creak as their branches wave in the wind; shafts and shards of moonlight flicker on the path, as if the wood is trying to lure the adventurers inwards...

- Part Two -
Into Eastern Chetwood

There are many crossing paths leading across the Chetwood, but the tracks the company start to follow the next morning soon take a north-east course, leading them towards the older patches of the forest. In the first hours of the day they wander between green hillocks and dells, in a wood that by daylight appears leafy and full of colour, the true image of quiet and peacefulness...

The Bluebell Wood

It is almost dark when the companions find themselves walking across a strange, eerie part of the wood that's full of bluebells. It is an ancient oakwood, and the violet-blue flowers cover its whole surface, like a carpet, their heavy heads gently swaying to the breeze. A faint honey smell is carried by the wind, bringing back memories of spring (regardless of the season the adventure is being run).

A few hundred yards into the Bluebell Wood, the companions spot a small clearing opening by the path. Three squat, dwarfish figures sit round a small fire. They are busy cooking some tasty-looking meat on long spits of wood, and a fine toothsome smell hits the companions as they approach.

The creatures are small as children and wear wide-brimmed soft hats, a deep red in colour. They do indeed look like Hobbits, but of a scruffier, wilder sorts than most, including even those few loners that wander the more remote parts of the Bree-land. As the companions get nearer, one of them silently stands up, then bows in a welcoming gesture.

An Encounter

Should the heroes want to interact with the three denizens of the Bluebell Wood, the Loremaster should let them introduce themselves as usual. The trio remains silent for the whole length of the encounter, but otherwise act in a

very friendly manner, often repeating the companions' gestures in what may seem an exceedingly obsequious manner. If a hero tries to divine information from them, a roll of **Riddle** interprets their attempts at communicating at meaning that the creatures live in the Bluebell Wood, and that they have never travelled beyond the boundaries of the Far Chetwood. Could they be some sort of Hobbitish woodwoses?

When all introductions are made away with, the creatures eventually sit down to continue their meal, inviting the companions to join them. Any urgent query from the heroes (like if the creatures have witnessed anyone else passing through the wood) is waved off, to be answered after the meal.

If the adventurers partake in the meal, they are of course in for a surprise: the meat is not venison or from any animal, but poisonous mushrooms disguised by the magic of the Bluebell Wood...

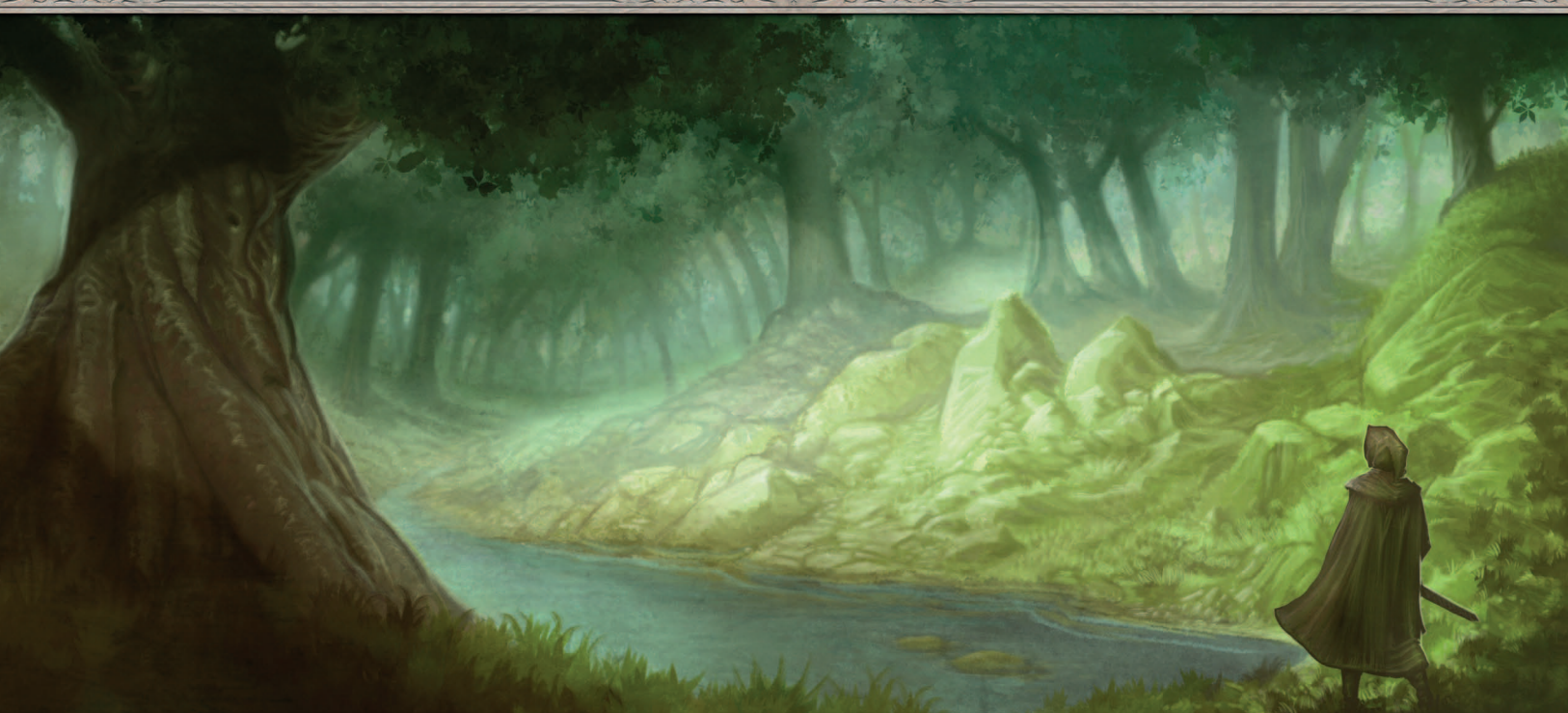
The Oakmen

Heroes eating from the Oakmen's food are automatically Poisoned (see *The One Ring*, page 130). As soon as any one of the heroes is poisoned, or if they all refuse to take part in the meal, the Oakmen make their move: All around the small fire more dwarfish creatures emerge from the shadows of the oak trees; in the darkness their hats look eerily like little blood-red toadstool caps. Under their hats, their eyes glint with a cold, inhuman light, above a red nose and slit mouth; They have lost any hobbitish feature, and their faces now look more like counterfeits of human expressions.

The little creatures move in deathly silence. There are two Oakmen for each companion. If defeated, the Oakmen flee back into the forest, with strange hissing sounds that might be taken as laughing and giggling.

Gorlanc's Man

If one or more suspicious heroes scout the nearby area, a roll of Search discovers the corpse of one of Gorlanc's men, lying hidden among the bluebells a few yards away from the Oakmen's fire. The side of his face is covered in blood that gushed from a head-wound, and scattered about him are the half-eaten remains of large mushrooms. Should the adventurers discover the body before the Oakmen spring their trap, the creatures abandon all caution and attack.



The Bluebell Wood Oakmen:

Attribute Level	
3	
Endurance	Hate
17	4
Parry	Armour
4	1d
Skills	
Personality, 0	Survival, 2
Movement, 2	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 1
Weapon Skills	
Sword	2
Bow	3
Special Abilities	
Hatred (first foe to strike him)	Snake-like Speed

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Copper Sword	4	10	12	Disarm
Oak Bow	4	11	12	Poison

The Trouble with Badgers

"Tom was telling an absurd story about badgers and their queer ways..."

On the second day of their journey into the Chetwood, the companions encounter one of the various nameless streams that cross the forest. The land has been falling steadily for some time now, as the wood gets nearer to the Midgewater Marshes, and the water of the creek splashes noisily among mossy rocks. By sunset, the breeze whispering among the trees begins to be tainted by the reek of the marshes to the east.

As the heroes scramble down a treacherous slope, at its bottom they see a pond of dark water, fed by the swift-running stream. A large patch of terrain close to the nearest shore looks like it was freshly turned. Dimly, the companions can hear voices crying and shouting, as if from deep underground.Gorlanc's men have been trapped in the tunnels of the Badger-folk of the Midgewater Marshes!

As the heroes draw closer, they spot several pieces of travelling and war gear lying about. They can also make out voices coming from below the earth, and can even speak to Gorlanc's followers if they kneel by the pond and shout at the top of their lungs.

Through this unlikely conversation, the player-heroes may discern the following:

- Gorlanc's men are all stuck under the earth in dark tunnels, so dark they can't even see each other, or anything else.

- Gorlanc isn't here – their Master led them into the Chetwood, but when they lit up a fire by the pool and

the ground opened, swallowing them up, he must have managed somehow to escape.

- They feel that there are creatures burrowing around them. They hear them sniffing and raking the earth with claws. One man even says to have seen their blinking eyes.

- They don't know where Gorlanc went. One of them insists that the Master will return to free them, another that the Master has betrayed them, and the third is terrified that Gorlanc is there in under the ground with them, only he's keeping perfectly silent and still, and listening to them betray him. The Master delights in cruel tricks like that, he says.

The followers of the sorcerer beg the player-heroes to do something and free them. If the player-heroes try to dig the buried men up, the soft ground above them starts to collapse, and the three thugs in the tunnels scream and beg them to stop.

Rings of Smoke

As the companions are busy thinking about what to do next, they suddenly smell the fragrance of pipe-weed that has been recently lit, and looking about them they discover that a grey-cloaked figure has apparently been among them for a while now, sitting on a tree stump.

"Well met, my friends." says the stranger, puffing at his pipe. *"It seems that Butterbur knew what he was saying, for once!"*.

The stranger is Gandalf the Grey, of course. When the companions recover from the surprise, the Wizard explains that he was in Bree looking for news about the escape of Gorlanc, when Barnabas Butterbur, the innkeeper of The Prancing Pony, informed him about the companions and their mission. (Should the heroes wonder about how Butterbur could know about their task, Gandalf says that there isn't much happening in the Bree-land that Barnabas doesn't know about – he is much wiser than he looks.)

Unfortunately for the companions, Gandalf is quick to confirm that Gorlanc isn't indeed trapped underground with his men:

"I found tracks before I came here, leading out from where the wood ends and the marshes begin. It seems he fled east from here, reached the borders of the marshes, and then turned south. You need to take it from here and find out where he went. I can deal with the badgers and the sorcerer's clueless minions here, so you won't need to tarry any longer."

The Fate of the Prisoners

Before they leave to continue their hunting, Gandalf asks the companions what should be done with Gorlanc's men. He intends to personally frighten the prisoners out of their wits and then set them free with an oath not to trouble anyone ever again, but the Wizard wants to test the heroes first...

If the companions urge Gandalf to kill or torture the prisoners, or suggest that he free them so the player-heroes can fight them, then the Wizard is visibly displeased, and without saying what he will actually do with them, he lets the companions go with a frown.

If the player-heroes propose anything similar to Gandalf's own decision, for example suggesting to bring them into the custody of the Reeve of Bree, or anyway adopt a different solution that doesn't involve the prisoners to suffer or die, the Wizard is impressed by the companions' capability for Pity and considers them worthy of a reward:

"I owe a big debt to the Badger-folk for the little trick they played on Gorlanc, blessed be their grimy paws! The sorcerer was fleeing with such haste that he left something behind. I found this at the borders of the marshes."

From a fold in his cloak Gandalf draws a silver sickle. After looking at it for one long moment as if lost in thought, he hands it to the companions. *"This is not of the sorcerer's own making – he must have dug it out of some barrow in the North. Maybe you'll find it useful. Now, don't delay any further!"*

(Gorlanc has used the magical properties of this silver sickle as a dowsing rod, to locate a particular root he knew to grow along the borders of the Midgewater Marshes - see **Part Three**, page 100).

The Gardener's Sickle

The Gardener's Sickle has a silver blade that never dulls. It was made by the Elves, long ago. Under the rules presented in *Rivendell*, it is considered a Wondrous Artefact with a Blessing to Explore.

Back to Bree

Following the directions given by Gandalf, it doesn't take much time for the companions to find the tracks of the sorcerer, and they are soon back on Gorlanc's trail as he heads southwest.

The next morning, they pursue him back across the Bree-land, but to no avail. They find a few more tracks, enough to convince them that Gorlanc passed this way, but the sorcerer cannot be found.

Once back in Bree, the company may search further, but there is no sign of the sorcerer on the Road or in the Wild. It is as though the sorcerer vanished.

The next part of this adventure takes place weeks or even months later. The Loremaster may choose to skip over the time, give the company a short Fellowship phase, or even run another adventure in the gap before continuing to **Part Three – Things out of Place.**

– Part Three –
Things Out Of Place

And what became of Gorlanc, after he fled the Chetwood? The sorcerer had lost much of his power and influence, but none of his cruelty and cunning. He knew that if he fled along the Road, or cross country, the pursuing Rangers would surely find him. He had to hide – and where better to hide than a Hobbit-hole?

Just outside the village of Staddle, there is a large old Hobbit-hole, so big and so ancient that polite Hobbits call it a Smial. Since time immemorial (or at least since the time of the kings), it has been home to the Undertree family, named because a huge old apple tree grows atop the Smial, and the hole's many tunnels and cellars wriggle and squirm around its labyrinthine roots. The Undertrees own large apple orchards in the farmland around Staddle.

In the dead of night, knife in hand, Gorlanc came to the great round front door of the Undertree Smial. When the Hobbit-porter opened the door, Gorlanc pressed the knife to the poor boy's throat and demanded he show him to the master's rooms.

Now, the master of the Undertree Smial and head of the family is old Alphonsus Undertree, and the apple of his eye is his granddaughter Blossom. Gorlanc crept into Blossom's rooms and poisoned the young Hobbit-maiden with a secret venom, and told Alphonsus that the girl would most certainly die unless Gorlanc regularly treated her with an antidote. If the Undertrees told anyone about their new house guest, or tried to murder Gorlanc while he slept, then Blossom would perish.

So, for the weeks or months between the night Haleth the Ranger called for the company's help and the start of this part of the adventure, Gorlanc's been squatting in the Undertree Smial, an unwanted house guest who's long

outstayed his welcome. Worse, he has invited several of his other surviving followers to join him in his new hiding-place.

The sorcerer's current plan is to graft a malicious root he dug out from the ground on the borders of the Midgewater Marshes to the great apple tree growing atop the Smial. This way he hopes to corrupt the spirit of the apple tree, placing it under his command.

All he needs to do is wait for the harvest, for the darkening of the year...

Gossip in Bree

The company might get hints of the presence of Gorlanc in any of the following ways. Intersperse these rumours with red herrings and regular gossip about trivial matters:

- The Undertrees of Staddle didn't invite anyone to their midsummer feast! They usually invite half the village. This is quite an unforgivable snub.

- Matt Woolfoot, one of the serving boys at the Undertree Smial, has developed a crippling fear of both Big Folk and trees – and, presumably, big trees. The Woolfoots have sent him to stay with cousins in the Shire until his nerves are fixed.

- This year's apple-harvest looks to be a bumper one, and no mistake. Why, all you have to do is look at the old apple tree atop Undertree Smial, with its overloaded branches and big blossoms.

- Hear about the ghost of Staddle? According to Big Bob the Swine-Herd (that's Big Bob who's a Hobbit, not Small Bob who's a Man, mind you), he saw a pale figure sneaking 'round the trees, and then it vanished into thin air! And he says that one of his piglets went missing too, round the same time. Do ghosts eat piglets?

Albert Undertree

Young Albert Undertree is Blossom's brother, the prince of the Undertree family. In the past, he was a dashing young gentle-hobbit, always with a kind word for everyone he met. Of late, though, he's been strangely quiet and distant. It's enough of a personality change to be noticeable, even to the most unobservant player-hero.

Watching Albert

The companions spot Albert buying some unusual supplies in the market at Bree; lots of food (not unexpected for a Hobbit family), but also cutlery and plates for Big Folk, odd roots and herbs not usually used in cookery, and strange copper pots custom-made by a passing Dwarven tinker.

With a successful roll of **Awareness**, the companions spot an ill-favoured Man keeping an eye on Albert. This stranger isn't a resident in Bree; he came up the East Road, and goes back that way when Albert goes back to Staddle. With a great or extraordinary success, the characters spot Albert giving a purse of coin to the stranger.

Following Albert

If the characters follow Albert, they discover that he rides out of Staddle every few weeks. On these strange errands, he goes down the East Road to the edge of the Chetwood, or even as far as the Forsaken Inn, and there he meets with suspicious Men who remind the company of Gorlanc's followers. Sometimes, he delivers a note to them, written in a cipher neither he nor they can read (Gorlanc's men bring the note to one of his surviving lieutenants; these messages keep Gorlanc appraised of how many of his followers escaped the battle at the fort).

Some of these Men make arrangements to meet Albert in the Chetwood; from there, Albert guides them to a secret entrance into the Smial.

Confronting Albert

Albert is terrified to speak to the player-heroes about anything other than the most trivial matters. He'll pass the time-of-day with them, or exchange a word or two about the apple harvest, but as soon as the heroes ask him any questions about his family or his business, he immediately claims that he has an urgent appointment, producing a pocket-watch from his waistcoat and exclaiming that he's late, he's late to underline his haste. A **Riddle** or **Insight** test confirms that he's lying, and that he's terrified of being seen talking to anyone.

If the player-heroes force Albert to talk to them, run it as an encounter. Unlike a regular encounter, where the player-heroes are petitioning a lord or householder for a favour like assistance or lodgings for the night, here the challenge is quelling Albert's fears for long enough to get some answers out of him.

Set Tolerance

The initial Tolerance is equal to the highest Valour in the company.

All through the conversation, Albert begs the companions to let him go, saying that they're all in terrible danger and, worse, putting his sister Blossom at risk. Don't they know he's being watched? Gorlanc has eyes everywhere!

When Albert the Tolerance is reduced to 0, he starts to panic, frantically twisting his handkerchief into knots and sweating visibly. If the companions exceed his Tolerance, he either runs off or starts screaming for help and telling anyone who'll listen that the company is trying to rob him.

Introduction

The company's spokesperson may introduce themselves using **Inspire** or **Awe**. In the former case, it's a heartfelt plea to Albert to trust the characters. In the latter, it is more likely to involve grabbing the Hobbit and telling him to shut up and listen.

Interaction

Persuade, **Inspire**, **Riddle** or **Awe** could all be used to elicit answers from the unfortunate Hobbit. Each success garners one of the following answers:

- There's a horrible man named Gorlanc hiding in the cellars of the Undertree Smial. He's poisoned Blossom, and says that if the Hobbits don't obey him, she'll die!
- Gorlanc's not alone. He sent Albert out to fetch several other Men, and they're almost as horrible. Now they're all hiding in the cellars of Undertree Smial, drinking Alphonse's good cider and plotting some terrible villainy.
- Gorlanc put a purple crystal under Blossom's tongue, and now she gets horribly sick if she doesn't get a dose of antidote every few days. Only Gorlanc knows how to make the antidote.
- The Men are hiding from the Rangers; if any more Rangers show up in Staddle, he'll kill everyone in the Smial.
- They're doing something else in the cellar, something that smells foul and terrible. Albert has bad dreams every night he sleeps at home now. They've defiled his family halls.
- He doesn't know what to do. He's scared that if he acts against Gorlanc and the other Men, he'll doom his sister and the rest of his family. What can be done?

If the characters question Albert about the layout of the Smial, he will reveal the existence of the Back Door and the Secret Cellar (see page 106). If the party win his trust, he might give them a key to the Front Door.

- Part Four - Watching & Waiting

Foolhardy players may wish to rush straight off to the Undertree Smial to drive Gorlanc out with sword and fire, but, as Albert warned, an open attack on the sorcerer's refuge will doubtless end in disaster. Gorlanc has hostages,

and even if the company could somehow safely free them all, there's still the matter of Blossom Undertree and the sorcerer's poison. The player-heroes must come up with a plan before assaulting the Smial.

Alternatively, if the company never confront Albert, and instead take a stealthier approach, this part of the adventure covers information gathering and reconnaissance.

Alerting Gorlanc

From this point onwards, once the player-heroes know that the Undertree Hobbits are being held hostage, they must be especially cautious. You should warn them that if they draw too much attention to themselves, they'll alert Gorlanc and things will end very badly.

From now on, if a player fails any roll with an ᚠ, you should pick one of the following consequences:

- More Guards! Gorlanc recruits some more thugs for hire from the Forsaken Inn, or sends word to another of his surviving followers to come join him in his new hiding place. Roll a Success dice and add that many guards to Gorlanc's retinue.
- Murder Most Foul: Gorlanc kills one of the Hobbits to keep the rest in check. This death weighs heavily on the souls of the player-heroes; each of them gains 1 Shadow point.

Watching the Smial

Keeping the Undertree Smial under observation (either by hiding in the surrounding woods with rolls of **Stealth**, or by asking for gossip and rumour with rolls of **Riddle**) yields the following information – one fact per success.

Hostages

If the players don't already know, they can work out that the Undertrees are being held hostage by watching them. On the rare occasions they're allowed out of their Hobbit-hole, the Undertrees cast furtive, nervous glances back towards their home, as if there's some darkness lurking there. Gossips in Staddle talk about how the Undertrees have always been snooty, but lately they've been especially standoffish and private, and how some of them – like young Blossom – seem to have locked themselves away in the Smial altogether.

Watchers

There are three (or possibly four) sets of sentries keeping watch at the Undertree Smial. Sneaking into the Smial in **Part Six** will require bypassing some or all of these watchful eyes.

- **The Hobbits:** The Undertree Hobbits have been told that if they see anything out of the ordinary, they are to report it to Gorlanc. The Undertrees rarely leave their Smial, but that doesn't mean they sit around underground all the time. There's much too much to do: cows to be milked, orchards to be tended, lawns to be mowed, elevenses to be had out on the patio. It's a miserable, sullen elevenses, of course – they have to have tea because Gorlanc told them not to do anything that might arouse suspicion, so the poor Undertrees dutifully march out and choke back cakes that taste of tears and bitterness so no one suspects they're under the control of an evil sorcerer.

If the companions have made contact with Albert, or convince the other Undertrees that they can save the day with an **Inspire** test, then the Hobbits won't alert Gorlanc when the time comes. See Rallying the Undertrees, on page 106.

- **The Dogs:** The Undertrees keep several large but harmless wolfhounds to see off scrumping Hobbit-children. They'll start barking if anyone comes close to the Smial. A successful Awe test, or use of an appropriate Trait like Beast-lore, can calm the hounds long enough to get past them.
- **The Men:** Gorlanc keeps his followers well out of sight, but he has them guard the Back Door of the Smial by night (see page 105), and they sometimes stretch their legs by wandering around the orchard. Sneaking around the orchard at night requires a **Stealth** test; getting through the Back Door without

being seen would take a Ring of Invisibility – or a clever distraction.

- **The Tree:** If the company waits too long, then Gorlanc is able to put his evil plan into action and awakens an evil spirit in the apple tree, turning every root and branch into his spies. See *The Coming Harvest*, below.

The Coming Harvest

Gorlanc brought a malicious root out of the Midgewater Marshes, to graft it on to the old apple tree that grows atop the Smial and taint it. Based on some old lore that the sorcerer studied, this bog root is the living remnant of a gigantic tree that once grew in the area and that was cursed during the wars against Angmar.

In the autumn, when the apple tree bears fruit, all those fruit will be tainted, and all those who eat of them will be vulnerable to Gorlanc's trickery.

Gorlanc has already grafted the root to the tree, and slowly, the tree is waking up, like the wicked, rotten trees of the Old Forest. It's most active at night. A successful **Awareness** or **Lore** test, or the use of an appropriate Trait like *Gardener*, spots there's something strange about the tree.

- The apples this year are especially large, but taste oddly bitter if eaten.
- The big tree atop the Smial rustles oddly, and not always when the wind blows.
- The roots on the surface seem to twist and writhe as if in pain.

The tree can alert Gorlanc to the presence of intruders if they cross any of its roots (say, to get through the Back Door or down the chimney). The only way to avoid this is to temporarily lull the tree to sleep with a **Song** roll.

The results of this roll determine how long the tree is put to sleep:

- Success means the tree sleeps for a roughly a minute
- Great Success means the tree sleeps for roughly two minutes
- Exceptional Success means the tree sleeps for half an hour

The Antidote

In order to be sure of curing Blossom, the player-heroes need to learn about the poison Gorlanc used on her. They could find this out by:

- Questioning Albert, and discovering that Gorlanc used a 'purple crystal'.
- Sneaking into Blossom's room and examining her (requiring a **Healing** roll, or use of the *Leechcraft* Trait).
- Examining the herbs and tinctures that Albert purchases in the market (requiring a **Lore** roll, or use of the *Herb-lore* trait).
- If Berelas (page 80) is still in Bree (perhaps in its jail...), she can easily identify the poison and suggest an antidote.

Armed with this knowledge, a successful roll of **Lore** or **Healing** (or an appropriate Trait) allows the characters to guess that Gorlanc is using an ancient poison called *saewesgal*. The cure is a much stronger, more concentrated brew of the weak tea that Gorlanc has been using to treat the symptoms.

The Undertree Smial

The Undertrees have a magnificent Hobbit hole. They're one of the wealthier families in Bree-land, so while their home cannot match say, Brandy Hall or the Great Smials of Tookborough, it compares favourably to Bag End, and is much, much larger. Tunnels run and spiral in many different directions, often following the root network of the tree above.

There are storerooms and presses for making cider, cellars and pantries that hold enough food to feed an army, attics crammed with mathoms, a library of several dozen books, apartments for five generations of Undertree Hobbits, guest rooms, breakfasting rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, night kitchens (which contain only those supplies needed for a midnight snack) and nurseries.

The main living area is a two-level affair, running along the south and west side of the hill. Two rows of windows look out over the lawns and the tree-lined driveway that runs down to the road to Staddle.

Behind the Smial are the extensive apple-orchards of the Undertrees.

Upper Level

- **Blossom's Room:** The unfortunate Hobbit girl is now too ill to leave her bed, thanks to Gorlanc's poison. If the player-heroes slay Gorlanc without first finding a way to save Blossom, then their victory will be blighted by her death. Any character with any ranks in **Healing** or the *Leechcraft* Trait can tell instantly that Blossom has been poisoned and is on the brink of death.

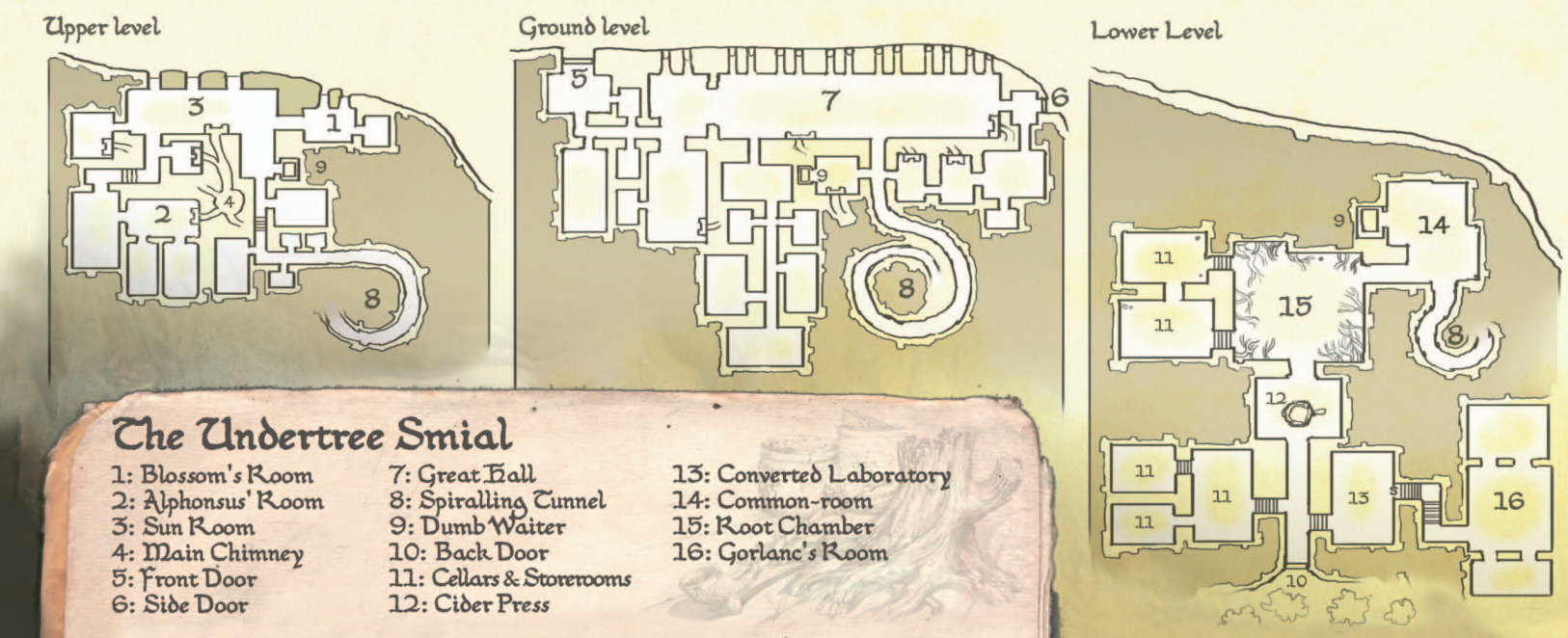
- **Alphonsus' Rooms:** Old Alphonsus, the head of the family, has had his will broken by Gorlanc. He won't dare resist the sorcerer unless the player-heroes rally him with a successful **Inspire** test. See page 106 for more on turning the Undertrees against Gorlanc.

- **Sun Room:** This large room boasts two huge and expensive windows that let in the summer sunshine. It's a lovely spot to snooze on a warm afternoon, or for aged Hobbit grandparents to sit and watch the children playing on the lawn below. For the player-heroes, it's important for another reason: these are the only windows in the whole Hobbit-hole big enough for a Man or Dwarf to climb through.

- **Main Chimney:** Even the cosiest Hobbit-hole needs a warming fire in winter-time, but this Smial is built under and around and even in a huge apple-tree, so a normal chimney was not an option. A particularly brilliant and eccentric ancestor of the family designed this special crooked chimney. All the fireplaces in the Smial feed into one central shaft, and then that shaft runs off at a steep angle to a little folly in the orchard, made to resemble a tumble-down ruined tower, modelled (it is said) on the watchtower at Weathertop. Especially brave (and small) characters could try clambering down the chimney, as long as it is a warm night and no fires are burning below. The chimney-flue network gives access to most of the rooms in the hole via their fireplaces, but it is a perilous climb, requiring a successful **Athletics** roll to avoid getting stuck and an **Explore** roll to emerge in the right room.

Ground Level

- **Front Door:** The great Front Door of Undertree Smial is rarely opened, except for weddings, funerals and birthday parties. Everyone goes in and out the Side Door. It is ceremonially opened once a year when the first bottles of cider are brought out and distributed to the villagers of Staddle. Albert Undertree has a key to the Front Door, and can give it to the player-



heroes if they want to attempt an unexpected frontal assault.

- **Side Door:** The main door into the Hobbit-hole. It's always watched (by one of the Hobbits by day, and by one of Gorlanc's men by night.)

- **Great Hall:** This long tunnel runs all through the ground floor of the Smial. Its ceilings are tall enough for a Man to stand upright.

- **Spiralling Tunnel:** Instead of a stair, this steep spiral runs up and down between the levels of the hole. It's a tight fit for a big Man to wriggle through.

- **Dumb Waiter:** Another innovation, this hand-cranked lift is used to deliver food down and bring cider up. It goes all the way down to the secret cellar. The shaft could be used by stealthy heroes as a way to creep into the lower levels of the Smial.

Lower Level

- **Back Door:** The Back Door of the Smial is hard to find if you're not looking for it – it's in the middle of the orchard, hidden by rows of apple trees. It's usually guarded by one of Gorlanc's men, although he's under instructions to hide if any Hobbits wander by.

- **Cellars & Storerooms**

- **Cider Press**

- **Converted Laboratory:** Here's where Gorlanc brews up his potions and poisons. The air is foul-smelling; the brews are caustic and vile. However, all the ingredients for a cure for the poison can be found amid Gorlanc's jars and bottles.

- **Common-room:** This large cellar room has been adopted by Gorlanc's followers as their main living quarters. Any of the Men not on guard remain here, drinking and gambling.

- **Root Chamber:** Originally, this chamber contained a well, but the tree-roots found the water and choked the well-shaft. So, now it's a curiosity, a room full of tree-roots. Gorlanc took advantage of it to graft the root dug from the Midgewater Marshes to the apple tree.

Secret Cellar

- **Gorlanc's Room:** This older cellar was prone to flooding, and so the Undertrees sealed it off. Finding the entrance requires a **Search** test. Gorlanc's taken over this cellar and outfitted it with furnishings and luxuries looted from the upper levels.

– Part Five –
Death Under The Apple Trees

When the player-heroes finally move against Gorlanc, they must do so with stealth, speed or both. There are too many innocents at risk for them to treat the attack on the Undertree Smial as a siege or dungeon expedition, for Gorlanc will use the hostages against them.

To successfully storm the Hobbit-hole, the characters need to overcome the following challenges:

Getting In

How are the heroes getting into the Smial? The obvious entrances are watched; other ways in are more covert, but harder to use.

If suspicions are aroused – say, an intruder is spotted, or something seems to be amiss – then one or two of Gorlanc's men climb out of the common-room on the lower level of the Smial and head towards the disturbance. If the alarm is raised, half of them investigate while the others guard Gorlanc.

Rallying the Undertrees

The Undertree family hate and fear Gorlanc, but believe they're helpless to resist him. If they act, he will murder them. Even if by some miracle they were able to catch him by surprise, or poison his food, then Blossom Underhill would still die without the antidote the sorcerer provides for her. That means that the Hobbits living in the Smial will raise the alarm (but not fight) if they see the player-heroes. The company can get the Undertrees on their side by:

- Curing Blossom first, then going after Gorlanc.
- Convincing Alphonsus Undertree to trust them with an **Inspire** test.
- Persuading Albert Undertree to secretly inform his family to be ready for rescue.

If the company gets the Hobbits on their side, then the Undertrees will reveal the layout and hiding places of the Smial. The other great advantage of rallying the Undertrees is that it stops Gorlanc's men from using them as hostages, as the Undertrees can hide; the only thing more stealthy than a Hobbit hiding in the Wild is a Hobbit hiding in a mansion full of nooks and crannies where he played hide-and-seek for years as a child.

Battling Gorlanc's Men

In the cramped, narrow corridors of the Hobbit-hole, there's little room to swing a sword or thrust a spear. The TN for all melee attack rolls is increased by the Encumbrance rating of the weapon (so, +1 for a short sword, +4 for a great axe, no penalty for a dagger and so forth).

Gorlanc's men fight to the death as long as Gorlanc is alive. If the sorcerer's defeated, they become **Craven**.

Evil Roots

The added danger of the Smial is the tree itself. Thanks to Gorlanc's evil doings, the tree is half-awake and angry. As described on page 104, the companions can use **Song** to lull the tree to sleep, but it wakes up again when the alarm is raised. The tree-roots cannot attack the player-heroes directly, but they can still grab and trip intruders.

If any of the companions roll an on a Common skill test within the Smial, a hidden root either raises the alarm or reaches out and grabs them. A grabbed companion may escape with an **Athletics** test.

The Final Confrontation

When the player-heroes finally confront Gorlanc – the sorcerer, the tomb robber, the self-proclaimed lord of the North and enemy of the Enemy – they find a foul-smelling old man with a ragged beard. He is wearing a mixture of tattered robes and fine but Hobbit-sized clothing – a comfy Hobbit dressing-gown makes a tight jacket for a Man. He rants and raves at the company, claiming that he holds life and death in his hands. Touch him, he warns, and the Hobbit-girl will perish. Oppose him, and all of Bree-land will turn on the company. Attack him, and he will destroy them with his sorcery.

Gorlanc is lying; he has nothing left but lies, a little lore, and a poisoned knife.

Gorlanc's Followers:

Attribute Level	
4	
Endurance	Hate
14	3
Parry	Armour
4+2	1d+1
Skills	
Personality, 1	Survival, 2
Movement, 3	Custom, 1
Perception, 2	Vocation, 2
Weapon Skills	
Axe	3

Weapons:

Weapon Type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Axe	5		18	Break Shield

Gorlanc:

Attribute Level	
6	
Endurance	Hate
16	8
Parry	Armour
6	1d
Skills	
Personality, 4	Survival, 3
Movement, 3	Custom, 4
Perception, 3	Vocation, 4
Weapon Skills	
Dagger	3
Special Abilities	
Commanding Voice	Bewilder
Hatred (his foes)	-

Weapons:

Weapon type	Damage	Edge	Injury	Called Shot
Dagger	3		12	Poison*

***Gorlanc's Poison:** A hero Poisoned by Gorlanc becomes feverish for a number of rounds equal to the roll of a Success die (in addition to being Poisoned.) A feverish hero suffers a modifier of +6 to the TN of all actions. The effects of Gorlanc's poison wear off after a full week.

The Ring of Seven Jewels

If the Company failed to stop Gorlanc getting hold of the Ring of Seven Jewels in Strange Men, Strange Roads, then the sorcerer may still have access to the power of the ring when they confront him under the hill (based on how the battle against Gorlanc's fort went in your campaign).

- Epilogue -
A Harvest Moon

It is perhaps fitting that a man who dedicated his mortal span to looting the buried treasures of a past age should perish deep underground. Gorlanc's defeat ends this adventure. Any surviving followers of his surrender or flee.

The characters have proven themselves more than able to tackle mortal perils – but there are worse foes out there, in the wilder world. When they meet again Gandalf, the Grey Wanderer might show any worthy hero the secret paths to Rivendell...

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